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NEW LIGHT ON BYRON'S LOVES.

I. THE GLITTERING THRONG.

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WHEN we gaze, not without awe, at the long array of volumes containing the letters written by Byron with his own hand, it is only natural that we should wish to know more about the other side of the correspondence. Were the poet's friends and acquaintances as generous patrons of the post office as himself? If so, how many of their letters have survived, and where have the remnants been preserved? These questions may be answered in part by a glance through several big crimson cases which are housed in the famous library at No. 50 Albemarle Street, for these are crammed with letters, notes and anonymous effusions all addressed to the hero of so many romances, real and imaginary. One case stands out from all its fellows by reason of its intriguing label, 'Letters to Lord Byron from Well-known Ladies.' And when the lid is raised, out steps the whole glittering throng: Mary Chaworth Musters, 'the Bright Morning Star of Annesley'; Mrs. Spencer Smith, the 'Fair Florence' of *Childe Harold*; Lady Frances Wedderburn Webster, the Zuleika of *The Bride of Abydos*; Lady Caroline Lamb with her broken heart prominently displayed upon her sleeve; the Lady Falkland, who fancied herself at least two Byronic heroines rolled into one; Annabella Milbanke, 'the Princess of Parallelograms'; Madame de Staël, 'with her pen behind her ear and her mouth full of ink'; Miss Mercer Elphinstone, 'the Fops' Despair'; and Lady Melbourne, that 'modern Aspasia who united the energy of a man's mind with the delicacy and tenderness of a woman's.'

"FAIR FLORENCE."

Byron used to say that all women in a certain situation—that is, in love—wrote in exactly the same style, except Lady Oxford and Mrs. Spencer Smith. There are no letters from Lady Oxford in this collection and very few from Mrs. Smith, but just enough perhaps to illustrate her 'style.' It will be remembered

that she made a profound impression upon Byron's youthful heart when he met her at Malta in the autumn of 1809. She was, to all appearance, the kind of woman that a young man can write home about, and so Mrs. Byron was told that Mrs. Smith was bringing her a letter, and that the lady was very pretty, highly accomplished, and very eccentric though her reputation was unimpeached. She was unhappily married, had lived through as many adventures as the heroine of a novel, and—being suspected of conspiring against the French—had incurred the displeasure of Buonaparte.¹ In short, everything in her destiny was touched with romance. No wonder that the young man (he was just twenty-one) believed that his love for such a creature would be 'everlasting.' He was yet to learn, as he told Lady Melbourne, that he could get the better of any passion in three months.

After a few blissful weeks the lovers proposed to fly together to Friuli. But the island was in the hands of the all-pervading French, and the lady decided that the elopement should be postponed till the following year. Childe Harold paid his Constance poetical tribute with *Lines written in a Lady's Album* and set out on his pilgrimage alone.

When September came round again Mrs. Smith returned punctually to Malta to keep her tryst, but saw no sign of her lover. She waited patiently for two months and then, hearing he was at Athens, sent him a letter. In her careful English and her discreet style, she assures him that she has never forgotten a conversation that had taken place between them the previous autumn.

'You made me give you my word to keep it in mind and to remember well what you had said to me—and I did. In consequence of this I consider myself obliged to speak to you if possible, as I have something to say upon that subject which I cannot write.'

In September she had sent messages by a friendly sea-captain to inform him that she was again in Malta, but had received no answer.

'Therefore I took the resolution to apprise (*sic*) you of it myself, although I refused writing to you last year; but circumstances

¹ Constance Spencer Smith was the daughter of Baron Herbert, Austrian Ambassador to Constantinople. Her husband, some time British Minister at Stuttgart, was a brother of Sir Sidney Smith, the hero of Acre. Suspected of conspiring against Buonaparte, she was arrested at Venice by the French police in 1805, and was taken toward the Italian frontier with a prospect of being imprisoned at Valenciennes. But she was rescued at Brescia by a romantic Italian, Count Salvo, who, by means of a rope ladder, a boy's costume, and two boats, conveyed her across Lake Garda to safety.

compelling me to proceed to my native country, I may never find another opportunity of seeing you again. In case your thoughts are still the same as they were on the 16th of September, 1809, then set out for Malta on the very first opportunity, as I cannot stay here longer without injuring my own interests. But if you have changed your mind, if you are not in the same intention you was, then send me back this letter with your answer immediately. Is the seal still in your possession, or have you thrown it into the sea? If you decide upon coming I need not, I trust, recommend you to give your friends any other reason you chuse to give but the real one, for your sudden departure.

‘Believe me,

‘Most sincerely yours,

‘C. S.’

But still the lover tarried. He had been very busy composing *Childe Harold*, absorbing the Oriental atmosphere and flirting with the three Maids of Athens. Besides, he had already confessed—to himself—that

‘The spell is broke, the charm is flown :
Thus is it with Life’s fitful fever.’

But Mrs. Smith knew nothing about the spell being broke, nor even that she had been immortalised as ‘Florence.’¹ She merely thought that her letters had miscarried. And so on March 3, 1811, she wrote again :

‘Recollecting our conversation in September, 1809, I thought myself bound to talk to you on that subject, and my being obliged to leave this place early in the spring makes me fearful of missing you if you do not come soon. Malta is rather more brilliant than it was, and you would perhaps like it.’

If his plans and sentiments are changed, he is requested, as before, to answer by sending back her letter.

But it was not until the beginning of May that Byron reluctantly set sail for Malta where he came to ‘the most diabolical of explanations.’ It was the dog-days,² a sirocco was blowing, and

¹ In Stanzas XXX to XXXV of the second canto of *Childe Harold*. Also in the lines beginning :

Florence ! whom I will love as well
(As ever yet was said or sung)
Since Orpheus sang his spouse from Hell
Whilst thou art fair and I am young.’

² See his account of the affair in a letter to Lady Melbourne in 1812. It was not the dog-days, but probably Malta was at least as hot in May as England in July.

during the intervals of an intermittent fever—his love had intermitted with his fever—he feared that the ague and his passion would return with full force. However, after a sharp struggle, he got the better of both, the lady sailed up the Adriatic *en route* for Vienna, and the poet sailed down the Adriatic *en route* for England.

Byron felt no remorse for the part he had played, for Mrs. Spencer Smith, he now discovered, was a woman of no reputation. 'She was perfectly mistress of herself and every art of intrigue personal or political—not at all in love, though very well able to persuade me that she was so.' Nothing survived of this 'ambrosial affair' which had made him risk his life,¹ except some 'Duke of Yorkish letters'² and a few baubles, including his famous yellow diamond ring which the ladies of Cadiz had vainly tried to charm from his finger. His 'Florence' may have had no reputation, but at least he had given her a name which would last as long as the poem in which she was enshrined.

LADY FALKLAND SEES VISIONS.

Early in 1812 we find Lord Byron involved in a curious one-sided love affair, and the unwilling recipient of fiery effusions which are in strange contrast to the non-committal letters of Mrs. Spencer Smith. The poet had been the friend and boon companion of the ninth Viscount Falkland, a naval officer who was court-martialled and dismissed his ship in 1808 on account of 'some irregularity arising from too free a circulation of the bottle.' But there came a promise of reinstatement, and poor Falkland went off to 'Stephenson's Hotel'³ in Bond Street, to celebrate the good news. Here, in the exuberance of his spirits, he cracked a joke at the expense of a Mr. Powell who sent him a challenge.⁴ The duel was fought at Golders' Green—of all places—Falkland was mortally wounded and died on March 7, 1809. Byron, who had stood godfather to his friend's youngest son, wrote to his mother that he was much depressed at the death of poor Falkland, who

¹ He was nearly involved in a duel with the General's aide-de-camp at Malta in 1809.

² He refers to the Duke of York's letters to his *chère amie*, Mary Anne Clarke, who was accused (in 1809) of selling his patronage as Commander-in-Chief.

³ Generally alluded to as Stevenson's coffee-house.

⁴ Byron says that he lost his life for a joke that was not his own. According to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, however, Lord Falkland said, 'What! drunk again, Pogeys?' Mr. Powell did not relish the remark, and after a retort Falkland snatched a cane, and 'used it about his friend.' As he refused to make a public apology, Mr. Powell sent him a challenge.

had left not a shilling for his wife and four children. There is a story to the effect that the poet attended the christening of his friend's posthumous son, and put a £500 note into a breakfast cup. But Byron Carey was born in October, 1808, five months before his father's death, and we have Byron's word for it that he never saw Lady Falkland. However, it is certain that the poet gave substantial help to the unfortunate family.

Early in 1812 Lady Falkland was writing to Byron in formal style—addressing him as 'My Lord.' In the earliest letter that has been preserved, she complains that her former communications had been treated with total neglect. This marked, though silent, contempt had deeply wounded her feelings. She had intimated a wish to see his Lordship for the purpose of introducing his little godson and her other children, and also of thanking him personally for the great assistance he had given her in a moment of unexampled difficulty. She is on the eve of leaving London for some years and would like to know the reason for this singular alteration in sentiment towards the family of his departed friend. Finally, 'she has the honour to be his Lordship's truly obliged and humble servant, Christiana Falkland.'¹

Byron, it would appear, excused himself for his neglect on the ground that a correspondence, or indeed any intimacy with his friend's widow, might give rise to gossip. Lady Falkland was soothed and flattered by this suggestion. She replied on May 17 from the 'George Inn,' Derby, that she perfectly understands his Lordship's allusion and the class of person to whom he is indebted for their industry in spreading reports inimical to his character and intentions.

'I am grieved to say,' she continues, 'that from the present degeneracy of the age there was every reason to apprehend such would have been the case. And with regret I add that there are many whose natural depravity of mind would be led to misinterpret the good and noble action by which a really benevolent mind is actuated, and ascribe them to a wish of accomplishing some sinister design.' For herself she had no fear because in the conscious purity and rectitude of her heart she defied malice itself.

Childe Harold appeared in March, 1812, and presently found its way down to Lady Falkland at Derby. Her head seems to have been completely turned by the 'perilous stuff,' for she imagined

¹ Lady Falkland was a Miss Anton, daughter of a West India merchant.

that the ladies mentioned in it were portraits of herself, and that the poet was madly in love with her. Thus, on June 12, she bursts forth—

'Surely I cannot be mistaken! Byron, my adored Byron, come to me. I shall feel each hour an age until you are pressed to a heart as ardent and warm as your own. . . . Tell me, my Byron, if those mournful tender effusions of your heart to that Thyrsa whom you lamented as no more¹—were not intended for myself? I should not have been vain enough to suppose it did had not the date exactly corresponded with a severe illness under which I was at that time suffering. Your Farewell address in September, 1809,² also I think to be intended for me.'

Had he offered his hand and heart before she would certainly have declined it, and promised to be a sister to him.

'But now, my Byron, if you really believe I could add to or constitute your happiness, I will most joyfully accept your hand—but remember I must be loved *exclusively*—your heart must be *all my own* . . . I could not, my beloved Byron, brook a second time to be slighted by my husband.'

The letter concludes with a warning that he must give up his vices, shun his evil companions and settle down as her husband, friend and the father of her children. A lock of her hair is enclosed as a 'pledge of lasting love and amity.'

Although she received no reply to her outpourings, Lady Falkland was not disheartened. On July 13 she wrote again to say that she now understands his silence—it is all part of his generosity and nobleness of soul.

'I have again read your Romaunt, and feel more than ever convinced that in Greece, Cadiz, Florence, etc., I may trace myself—in Athens—Falkland your old ally—in the "Maid of Athens" your own Christina. . . . You believe that my affections are buried with Falkland in the tomb. Banish all apprehension on that account—I had long ceased to respect or esteem him. It is not a loveless heart I offer you, but a heart whose every throb beats responsive to your own.'

It was not until February 3, 1813, that Byron's patience was exhausted and he asked Hanson to forward a letter to a Mr. Corbett,

¹ The lines to Thyrsa were written in October, 1811, and published with *Childe Harold* in 1812. Byron referred to her as a young girl the date of whose death almost coincided with his arrival in England in 1811.

² To 'Florence.'

'relative to a foolish woman whom I never saw, who fancies I wish to marry her.' Lady Falkland was informed that Lord Byron would neither read nor answer her letters, and that if she persisted in writing he would insult her. But this she refused to believe and continued to bombard the poet with impassioned letters.

'I cannot any longer endure this dreadful agony of mind,' she exclaims—'Do you wait until I write again to yourself, my best beloved Byron. I would have done this sooner, but Mr. Corbett told me that you would insult me—of *this* I never felt a fear—and from your own note which he read to me—not one word of which I could or did believe. Oh no, the feelings of the heart are indeed reciprocal and hearts and minds will act in unison. Why, my adored boy, don't you return my affection as you did? What have I done to forfeit it? Pray do tell me, George,¹ that I may immediately try to repair what you believe to be the fault I may have committed. . . . That it was myself you meant in the Romaunt I am certain. Your constant allusions to the sea—the references to the chapel, and certainly the sympathy which attracted each towards the other. Your saying that you were withheld by every tie from offering your hand and heart.² Yes, feeling that I owed obligations to you, you thought, as every *noble mind* would do, that perhaps from motives of gratitude alone I might accept your offered hand. What I conceived your motive for writing the book was generously offering it that I might accept it or not. . . . Do not deem me superstitious, my dear Byron, but I have for years past been informed by Visions. I knew of poor Falkland's death, and other events, but none more forcibly than the Court-martial and his dismissal from his ship. Of your arrival I was apprised before I learnt it from anyone.'

Her dear elder boys, Lucius and Plantagenet, were reading the poems and pointing out passages which, they felt sure, referred to their Mamma, while little Byron was constantly asking after his godpapa.

But there came a time when the poor lady was forced to realise that she had been mistaken, and in a farewell letter she writes :

'For the last time, Byron, I address you. Human nature can bear much, which has been exemplified by me, but there are boundaries at which it stops, which you have certainly not attended

¹ So far as we know Lady Falkland was the only woman who ever addressed Byron as 'George' or 'my dearest boy.' At this time he was twenty-five, and she, who had been married in 1802, must have been nine or ten years older.

² Her references are to Stanzas XXVIII to XXXV of the second canto of *Childe Harold*.

to. After what has passed I will not enter into further explanation than to say our ideas are so perfectly dissimilar (though the minds may be congenial and the hearts certainly allied) that we could never be happy. I therefore entreat that you will forget everything that has passed. *Don't write to me. I will not open any letters from you—nor will I see you if you call.*

'I had heard that you had behaved very ill to the young lady you were going to marry some years ago.¹ I fear that tale was true, and, believe me, no woman possessing one particle of sense or reflection would submit to be treated as I have been—like a *puppet*. I trust it will be a lesson to you in future not to pursue the romantic course you have now taken, *but it appears to me you delight in being wretched yourself, and that you like to have partakers in your self-inflicted misery.* . . . God bless you—rest assured I will ever feel the warmest affection for you.'

On March 5 Byron wrote to Corbett that Lady Falkland had returned him the only two letters he had ever written to her, neither containing the least allusion which could make any person suppose that he had any intention farther than regarded her children.

'She now says I need not leave the country on her account. How she knows I am about to leave I cannot guess, but however she has *dreamed* right. But *her* being the cause is still more ludicrous than all the rest.'

THE FOPS' DESPAIR.

It was at Melbourne House during the season of 1812 that Byron was introduced to Miss Mercer Elphinstone (afterwards Madame de Flahault), a great heiress and a great coquette, who earned the title of 'the fops' despair.' She was the daughter of Lord Keith² by his first wife, Jane Mercer of Aldie. The girl was the same age as Byron—twenty-four—and though she lived at home she seems to have led as free and independent an existence as any young married woman of her day. She was also the most intimate friend and confidante of Princess Charlotte, whom she helped out of various girlish scrapes.

There is no reference to Miss Mercer (as her friends called her)

¹ At Derby she may have heard gossip about Byron's boyish devotion to Mary Chaworth.

² For his naval services Admiral Sir George Keith Elphinstone was created Baron Keith in 1797, and Viscount Keith in 1814. His second wife was Maria Hester Thrale, Dr. Johnson's 'Queeney.'

in Byron's published correspondence,¹ but J. C. Hobhouse, who first met her in 1814, mentions her frequently in his diary for that year.

'She is not handsome' [he notes], 'but has fine eyes. She is attractive, sensible and not at all shy. She told me she was present when the Princess of Wales burst into tears upon hearing the Prince abusing his Whig friends. The Prince had drunk immoderately; it was just after the first course was removed. The Princess began to sob violently, and her emotion became sensible so that the Prince said, "You had better retire," with which all the ladies rose; and the Prince, laying hold of Miss Mercer's arm, dragged her into an inner drawing-room, and sat there for half an hour. In consequence Miss Mercer was forbidden for eight months the *entrée* of Warwick House.'²

When Byron was introduced to Miss Milbanke at a party at Lady Caroline Lamb's (in 1812) Miss Mercer was among the guests, and the two girls went away together. Annabella, in a letter to Mrs. Leigh, says:

'Miss Mercer Elphinstone is incomprehensible. I suppose she thinks it becoming to her situation to be assuming, and that the encouragement she unfortunately meets with has increased this disagreeable habit. She was very roughly agreeable to me.'

It appears that the heiress, before leaving town for Tunbridge Wells, asked the poet for a frank, and he made her request an excuse for writing to her on July 29, 1812.³

'DEAR MISS MERCER,—

'In compliance with your request I send the frank which you will find on the outside, and in compliance with no request at all, but I believe in defiance of the etiquette established between single ladies and all gentlemen whatsoever, plural or singular, I annex a few lines to keep the cover in countenance.

'London is very dull and I am still duller than London. Now

¹ But in a letter to Moore (Jan. 5, 1821) Byron alludes to 'My dear Mme. Mae F., whom I always loved and always shall, not only because I did feel attached to her personally, but because she and about a dozen others of that sex were all who stuck by me in the grand conflict of 1815.'

² Princess Charlotte was then living at Warwick House. It was, of course, the scene at Carlton House that inspired Byron's notorious *Lines to a Lady Weeping*, which first appeared anonymously in the *Morning Chronicle* for March 7, 1812. They were then attributed to Tom Moore, and were not known to be Byron's till he published them with *The Corsair* in February, 1814.

³ The letters from Byron to Miss Mercer are preserved at Bowood, and are here printed (for the first time) by the kind permission of Lord Lansdowne.

I am at a standstill—what shall I say next ? I must have recourse to hoping—this then “comes hoping,”—that you have survived the dust of your journey, and the fatigue of *not* dancing at Lady Clonmell's the night before ; that Mrs. Lamb ¹ bears her widowhood like the matron of Ephesus, and that all Tunbridge is at this moment waltzing or warbling its best in honour of you both. I hope moreover that you will not gladden the eyes and break the hearts of the royal corps of Marines at Portsmouth for some time to come, and that—that—I am come to the end of all I can say upon nothing.

‘Pray forgive the inside of this for the sake of the *out*, and believe me if you had not done me the honour to require the one I should never have troubled you with the other.

‘I am (to talk diplomatically) with the very highest consideration,

‘Your sincere

‘and most obedient servant

‘B.

‘P.S. I am not sure that I have not been guilty of considerable impertinence in sending a word beyond the superscription. If so—let my defence and apology go together with my best respects to Mrs. Lamb—and tell her I wish the circuit well over.’

Miss Mercer was not at all alarmed at the idea of corresponding with a ‘single gentleman,’ for by return of post, on July 30, she sends him a charming letter, together with an invitation to join her and Mrs. Lamb in the country.

‘DEAR LORD BYRON,—

‘If you were wrong in writing, I suppose I am doubly wrong in answering you ; however I cannot resist the temptation of thanking you for your good-natured remembrance of my request, and still more for the inside of the present [?]² than the outer, which I am very happy to acknowledge, though I was not so unreasonable as to expect it.

‘As you complain of being dull in London, perhaps you might be induced to come here for a few days. I have many messages to that effect from Mrs. Lamb, who says she shall be quite angry if you do not, and I think you would not dislike this place. There is some society which you may either have or not as you please, and the country is quite beautiful. We are out together almost the whole day, and I am sure you would be amused if you could see us set off on some of our expeditions mounted upon donkeys

¹ Mrs. George Lamb, *nee* St. Jules. Her husband was a younger son of Lord Melbourne's. He seems to have been on circuit at that time.

² This word is indistinct. It looks like ‘present’, but it may be ‘frank.’

with Swiss saddles, and followed by two or three little boys and half a dozen dogs.

'I found Mrs. Lamb in the *rudest health* imaginable. She is *grown quite fat*, and I am in a fair way of following so bright an example,¹ having left all my late hours and whirligig propensities to my friends in London, while I accommodate myself to the more wholesome fashions of this place, getting up at eight o'clock and going to bed at ten, by which means I find my appetite has got far beyond the *prohibited* wing of a chicken.²

'I think I see you holding up hands and eyes at this confession. What can I say for myself for having trespassed upon your time and attention so long? I believe the best way is not to add to my fault by apologies.

'Yours sincerely,

'M. M. E.'

And Byron, who, as he says was finding London '*unwholesome*' (in more ways than one), jumped at the invitation and wrote on August 3.

'The reply with which you have honoured me has dispelled certain qualms which followed my presumption, for if right—I am rejoiced to be so for once in my life, and if wrong—you have been good enough to forgive me, though so speedy a repetition of the offence can hardly lay claim to further patience or future pardon.

"*Sans phrase*" then, I have so great a dread of Mrs. L.'s wrath, and am so fully convinced of her sincere desire to see me—not at Tunbridge or in her awful presence, but there or anywhere else, so that I am not in London at this very *unwholesome* season of the year, that I shall in a few days with the greatest reluctance forthwith proceed to do penance at her feet, and listen to the very appropriate *parables* which she selects for the edification of the *penitent*. If you will have the goodness to submit to her inspection the above sentence, she will probably understand it without my troubling you or her with further comment. I should be so sorry to see her "quite angry" that though I am well aware that it is not the exquisite pleasure of seeing me but of preventing me from seeing that induces her kind request³ I shall comply with it and set out for Mecca or Tunbridge on Wednesday next. But why will she

¹ 'Slimming' was evidently not part of the 'cure' in 1812.

² Byron said the only feminine viands were lobster salad and champagne.

³ These rather cryptic phrases refer, no doubt, to the violent love-affair between Byron and Lady Caroline Lamb (Mrs. Lamb's sister-in-law) which had been the 'talk of the town' for the past three or four months. The lady's parents had implored the poet to leave London while they were preparing to carry her off to Ireland.

grow fat? and you too? That additional wing (with a bit of the breast superadded, I daresay) is worse than waltzing. But as I actually dined yesterday myself, I must bear these trespasses, and you must pardon my impertinence in repeating an offence less pardonable.

'I have been out and about amongst the select and benevolent few still left in London and we console ourselves with regretting the absentees—I doubt if any of us are equally fortunate. I shall not much embarrass myself with the brilliant society at Tunbridge, but I shall do honour to your donkey cavalcade in which I may most appropriately join. Ever since school and my sojourn at Cintra I have delighted in asses like a Sandman.

'My apology for this second intrusion will not, I fear, be better received for being delivered in person, but it will at all events prevent any further trouble from the pen into a paper of your

'obliged and sincerest

'BYRON.

'P.S.—I am somewhat ashamed of the above hieroglyphics, but you cannot say that I am ignorant of what Pope calls the "last great art" of writing¹ "the art to blot," after casting your eye over the scratches on the present page.'

What 'happened' at Tunbridge Wells will never now be known. At any rate the correspondence continued on frank and friendly lines, though at long intervals, or what Byron called 'intermittents.' On May 3, 1814, he wrote from '2, Albany':

'I send you the Arnaout garments, which will make an admirable costume for a Dutch dragoon. The Camesa or Kilt (to speak Scottishly) you will find very long. It is the custom with the Beys and a sign of rank to wear it to the ankle—I know not why, but so it is. The million shorten it to the knee, which is more antique and becoming—at least to those who have legs and a propensity to show them. I have sent but one camesa, the other I will despatch when it has undergone the Mussulman process of ablution. There are greaves for the legs—two waistcoats, one beneath—one over the jacket—the cloak—or sash—a short shawl and cap—and a pair of garters (something of the Highland order) with an ataghan wherewithal to cut your fingers if you don't take care; over the sash there is a small leather girdle with a buckle in the centre.

'It is put on in a few minutes. If you like the dress—keep it. I shall be very glad to get rid of it—as it reminds me of one or two

¹ The last and greatest art, the art to blot.—*Essay on Criticism*.

things I don't want to remember. To make it more acceptable I have worn this very little, and never in England except for half an hour to Phillips¹ I had more of the same description, but parted with them when my Arnauts went back to Tepalen and I returned to England. It will do for a masquerade.

'One word about "*caprice*"—I know you were merely in jest and that my *caprices*—supposing such to exist—must be a subject of laughter and indifference—but I am not unconscious of something not unlike them in the course of our acquaintance. Yet you must recollect that from your situation you can never be *sure* you have a friend (as somebody said of Sovereigns, I believe), and that any apparent anxiety on my part to cultivate your acquaintance might have appeared to yourself like importunity and—as I happen to know—would have been attributed by others to a motive *not* very creditable to me, and agreeable to neither.

'This is quite enough—and more than I have a right to trouble you with on this or any other subject.

'Ever yours very sincerely,

'B.'

'How can I thank you half enough' [replied Miss Mercer] 'for your note and the splendid dress you have been so kind as to send me with it. My eyes were quite dazzled with its beauty, but I really have not the impudence to keep it, though I feel equally grateful to you for offering it to me.'² The latter part of your letter is too flattering for me not to thank you most sensibly for it. I am but too well aware of all the *désagréments* of my own situation.³ I am certain no woman of real feeling could value such a one. However, with regard to our acquaintance, I can only say I must ever think of it with pleasure, and trust that all the nonsense that has been said, or may be said, will not prevent its continuance.'

She had promised him a sketch of Madame de Staël, but 'when I came home last night I found that one of my cousins had carried off the original Madame de Staël. I have another done for you, which I fear is not so like, but will at least prove my good intentions of performing my promise. . . .'⁴

'P.S. I hope we shall meet at dinner to-day at Lady Jersey's.'

¹ Byron's portrait in Albanian dress by T. Phillips, R.A., belongs to Sir John Murray, but a replica is in the National Portrait Gallery. The engraving is well known.

² Byron must have persuaded her to keep it, for it is still treasured by her descendants.

³ She refers, of course, to her situation as a great heiress.

⁴ Hobhouse says that Miss Mercer showed him some books of her own illumination, 'an employment she resorts to instead of the needle.'

The last two letters were written in April, 1816, just before Byron went into exile. He had sent Miss Mercer a book as a 'memorial,'¹ and she, one of the few friends who stuck to him through the scandals, wrote to thank him for his kindness

'in sending the book which I have received from Mrs. Leigh. As you already know the desire I have to possess any volume that had occupied a place in your library, it is needless for me to repeat it, still less how much more I must value this one, chosen by your own hand, and in a way so flattering! I should, therefore, only beg you to believe that no one can feel more sensibly obliged by your kindness than I do, or more sincerely return the friendship you have so amiably expressed for me. Adieu, dear Lord Byron, with every good wish. Believe me most sincerely and obliged,

'M. M. E.'

And then came the last long, melancholy and rather incoherent letter from Byron. In the midst of his preparations for an immediate departure, it is significant that he found time to write thus voluminously because he wanted to explain—both to her and himself—the rather anomalous relations that had existed between them during the past four years. And the gist of the whole matter is that he had been attracted by her, and had thought of proposing to her, but was deterred by his fear of being called a fortune-hunter. And so he rambles along—the date is April 11, 1816.

'I thank you truly for your kind acceptance of my memorial—more particularly as I felt a little apprehensive that I was taking a liberty of which you might disapprove. A more useless friend you could not have—but still a very sincere and by no means a new one—although from circumstances you never knew (nor would it have pleased you to *know*) how much. These have long ceased to exist—I breathe more freely on this point—because *now* no motive can be attributed to me with regard to you of a selfish nature—at least I hope not.

'I know not why I venture to talk thus—unless it be that the time is come when whatever I may say cannot be of importance

¹ This 'Memorial' seems to have been a single volume. But there is also at Bowood Heyne's quarto edition of Virgil in eight volumes. This Madame de Flahault bequeathed to her grandson, the sixth Marquess of Lansdowne. She described it as 'Lord Byron's Prize copy of Virgil.' On the fly-leaf are the words 'Lord Byron, 1816' in the handwriting of Lord Keith. It does not appear that Byron ever won a prize at Harrow. Heyne's Virgil was included in the Catalogue of Byron's library which was sold after he left England in 1816. Presumably Lord Keith bought it.

enough to give offence, and that neither my vanity nor my wishes ever induced me at any time to suppose that I could by any chance have become more to you than I am now.

'This may account to you for that which—however little worth accounting for—must otherwise appear inexplicable in our former acquaintance—I mean those "intermittents" at which you used to laugh—as I did too—although they caused me many a serious reflection.

'But this is foolish—perhaps improper—yet it is, or rather was—the truth—and has been a silent one while it could have been supposed to proceed from hope or presumption. I am now as far removed from both by irrevocable circumstances as I always was by my own opinion or by yours—and I shall soon be still further—if further be possible—by distance.

'I cannot conclude without wishing you a much happier destiny—not than *mine is*—for that is nothing—but than mine even would have been with a little common sense and prudence on my own part: no one else has been to blame. It may seem superfluous to wish *you* all this—and it would be so if our happiness always depended on ourselves, but it does not—a truth which I fear I have taught rather than learned—however unintentionally,

'Ever most truly yours—

'BYRON.

'P.S. This letter was intended as an answer to your note—which, however, required none. Will you excuse it for the sake of the *paper* on which it is written? It is part of the spoils of Malmaison (as it was told me), and for this reason you will perhaps have the kindness to accept the few sheets of it which accompany this. Their stamp is the Eagle.¹ Adieu.'

When, just before he left England, Byron appeared at Lady Jersey's famous ball, all his friends and acquaintances turned their backs upon him except Miss Mercer who, with rare courage, stood by him to the last. In recognition, probably, of her loyal friendship, Byron sent her a parcel from Dover by Scrope Davies with a message: 'Tell her that had I been fortunate enough to marry a woman like her, I should not now be obliged to exile myself from my country.'

But Margaret Mercer was reserved for a happier fate. She was in no hurry to give up her independence,² for it was not till

¹ The paper on which this letter is written has two water-marks: (a) a wreathed head of Napoleon, (b) the Imperial eagle.

² She was well named 'the Fops' Despair,' for, according to common report, she refused the Duke of Clarence, the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Cochrane, and a string of less-known suitors whose formal offers of marriage are now at Bowood.

1817, when she was twenty-nine, that she married that most brilliant of soldiers and fascinating of men, the Comte de Flahault de la Billarderie,¹ and the marriage seems to have been a very successful one.

On the death of her father in 1823 Madame de Flahault became Baroness Keith in her own right, and in 1837 she succeeded to the Barony of Nairne. The husband and wife went to live in Paris in 1827, and we get glimpses of them in the letters of Lady Granville.² They had, she says, one of the two best houses in Paris, and all the 'little ladies' were desperately in love with Flahault 'but detested Lady Keith, who lay on her sofa, and returned the compliment. . . . I like her very much, but her strong good sense and good qualities are not appreciated here. I uphold her with a strong arm.' Flahault had become quite 'English' and domestic in his habits and preferred sitting with his wife to flirting with the ladies. His English ways, however, did not interfere with his diplomatic career, since he remained in high favour under Charles the Tenth and Louis Philippe, and at last, having completed the full circle, ended where he had begun, with a Buonaparte.

Madame de Flahault died in 1867, aged seventy-nine. To the last year of her life she retained the most friendly and faithful recollection of Lord Byron. 'Je suis tres fière,' she tells Madame d'Haussonville,³ 'de l'amitié qu'il m'a toujours témoigne, et avant tout j'apprécie la dernière et triste preuve qu'il m'en a donnée en m'envoyant cette touchant lettre d'adieu au moment meme de quitter l'Angleterre pour toujours. . . .'⁴

¹ Aide-de-camp to Buonaparte and the reputed son of Talleyrand. Scrope Davies (in an unpublished letter) says that Lord Keith objected to the marriage because he hated all foreigners, Frenchmen and Buonapartists in general, and Flahault in particular.

² Lord Granville was Ambassador in Paris—1826-41.

³ From unpublished letters in the possession of Lord Lansdowne, Madame d'Haussonville was writing books about Byron, and had asked Madame de Flahault for her recollections of the poet.

⁴ The Flahaults had five daughters. The eldest, who succeeded her mother in the Barony of Nairne, became the second wife of the fourth Marquess of Lansdowne. The present holder of the title is her grandson.

(To be continued.)

THE SWORD.

BY MARY WEBB.

RICHARD CLEDD was what is known among competitive mammas as a 'catch.' That no one had caught him was a mystery. When closely questioned as to their failure, girls would explain tearfully that, after one had gone a certain distance, and just as the intimacy promised to ripen into something else, one came to a glacier—or a volcano, they never knew which—in fact, one came to a standstill.

Golden heads nodded, like sleepy flowers, to his arm in the dance; lovely bare shoulders leant to pillow his dark beauty; flappers, daring as kittens, gave him butterfly kisses. He liked it. He laughed and gave them pretty things. He went to all the parties. But always, even in moments of wildest revelry, even with his greatest friends, his homeless eyes looked across the gaiety into the dark night beyond. Unsatisfied, he came to the houses of the great, the lovely and the gifted. Unsatisfied, he departed. There was a wistfulness in his eyes as he looked at people, especially at women. His friends said of him that he was the man who perpetually enquired for the goods that were not in the shop, not anywhere in the world. When the war broke out they said, 'This will cure him.' But it did not. He took his leaves as he took everything, quietly, rather sadly. He looked a little less often into the eyes of good women, and trafficked a little more eagerly with the 'daughters of joy' for their soulless comfort. He returned to the line punctually, cheerfully, competently. He was dependable, and men depended on him. When the world crumbled round them, and the crevasse of hell opened before them; when they were mown down as if by the fury of God, and left lying in torture, they would lift lost eyes to his deep, homeless ones, and feel saved. This was the more peculiar, as he had no religion to offer them as a solace. He had no tenets or views. He was not ambitious. They gave him honours and decorations in a kind of despair of being able to get through to him and express their gratitude and admiration. His batman made a useful little bit of tobacco-money by holding exhibitions of these for the benefit of other batmen.

'There y'are now! There's our little lot. V.C., Cross, and
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the whole caboodle. Youngest colonel in the regiment. Eat me aunt if we ain't in for a Field-Marshal's outfit one fine day.'

Richard had the love of these men—a love not to be won easily. They could not explain it. One man said it was his voice. 'Stirs you up, it does, right down to your stummick.' Another thought it was his understanding way of looking at you. They could not express the sense of the deep, icy integrity which lay in his soul like a sheathed sword and made him as absolute, omnipotent, terrible and beautiful as a god.

He went his way, wistful, lonely. Not one of the flower-soft, bird-voiced, gazelle-eyed girls he met could call him home. They flung themselves at his feet. He politely helped them to arise. They offered all. He appeared not to notice it, and their all seemed nothing. They spread roses in his path, but beneath his chill, penetrating gaze the roses died. His expression was a challenge and a reproach to his hostesses. Their homage was courteously accepted, punctiliously returned. Their galaxies of beauty were danced with, dined, fêted. He went, it seemed, as far as he could. Then, with an almost audible sigh, he left them.

And at last, one winter day, in the most unlikely place in the world, he met her.

He was looking for a housekeeper. Being a bachelor, he went to a registry office himself, and the woman who ran the registry office was—she. He knew it the moment he looked at her. She was home. All the bloom and the blossom, the intolerable sweetness of the year, from the first chill snowdrop-bud to the final pomp of autumn, were here, now, at eleven o'clock of the forenoon, in the registry office.

He sat down, looking at her so long and so intensely that she was rather frightened.

'And what,' she enquired brightly, 'can I do for you?'

'Everything,' he replied, making no attempt to explain this curious statement. But in a little while after this admission, this breaking-up of a life's reserve, there came to him a sudden expressiveness. He talked to her as he had never talked to anyone. She was amazed, troubled.

'He has not dared,' she said to herself, 'to trust any human soul, for fear it should betray his trust.'

She sat very still, listening. Cries came from forlorn streets.

Snowflakes fingered the window and collapsed into tears. The gas-fire gurgled in persistent commonplaceness. Across the table with its crowded files she saw his face—the face of Odysseus come up from the sea. She had no idea, would not have been influenced by the fact, that his was one of the greatest names in England, that he could talk with kings, buy duchesses. But she guessed that he would be too fastidious to wish to buy anybody. His face seemed vaguely familiar, as faces do when one has seen various renderings of them in picture papers. The black hair, touched with grey. The stern yet sweet lines at the corners of his mouth. The clean-cut eyelids, straight across the pupils as if to give an intenser focus. These she seemed to know. His very soul she knew also. She could feel the shock of it to the roots of her being.

It was marvellous that he, so obviously strong and self-sufficing, should have come to her out of that cold world of lost cries beyond the pane, like Blake's 'Little Boy Lost.' She, and she alone, could make him a 'Little Boy Found.'

She was afraid of this call to her greatest, most beautiful self. She wanted to lapse again into the registry-office lady, with her busyness, her trivialities, her little tea-equipage, little storms, tiny victories.

She had been obliged to fight so hard for this rather dreary room that she had a fondness for it. She was contented as people are when they are living only with their second-best selves. She realised that this new self, once in command, would make life very difficult. There would be sacrifices, a giving-up of easy standards and slurred principles. Why had this happened to her? She wondered rebelliously while they sat there through the short, bleak day, with occasional intrusions from stout ladies of culinary capacity, breathlessly determined not to be 'put upon,' and tall young women with 'manner,' and mammas piloting prospective buttonses from whose lips the liquorice was not yet quite gone.

Through it all he sat there, with the same faint twinkle, the same slight, dry, wistful smile as he had worn many a time in doomed trenches, O.P.'s, and no-man's-land. He was bored, but the day would end some time, and they could go to a restaurant and talk; and was she not here? Had he not been looking for her ever since, as a small boy in a white suit, he had cried because the beautiful angel in the church window would not come down to him? He had found her now. Was he going to risk losing her for the sake of a few errant cooks?

At last the violets of dusk brimmed the streets. They were in a restaurant. They talked, with intervals of silence.

And again next day—many days. For he was not a hurrifful man, though changeless in his few resolves, his fewer desires.

Life became for both a heaven sandwiched between generals who would wash and generals who would not.

In one of the immortal moments he learnt her Christian name—her strange, charmed, fragrant name, falling lingeringly on the air like cool petals.

‘Eucharis.’

He was silent for a long while, savouring it, listening to the music of it.

‘Eucharis!’ The tall, white, unmatched eucharis lily flowered in his heart. A holy, peaceful name, with a faint backwash of the chants of eucharistic feasts. Yet, as her name, stirring passion. She was so velvet-white herself, with that lucent, mayflower skin, those lips where sweetness and strength kept truce, that high, candid brow, the eyes with large pupils like a child’s—wondering, as if just lifted from looking at a miracle.

He was melted, humbled, by her still grace. He thought he would have felt the same even if she had had no soul. But when her soul came like a gentle falcon to his hand, he could have shouted with laughter at the insane foolishness of other men. To have passed her by! Her, to whom all men must turn, in this seared, sin-scorched world, as those dying in the desert turn to a mirage of silver lagoons and large-leaved trees.

Many did turn to see these two go by. For he was known almost wherever England was known, and she had that air of otherwhereness, distraught as one newly arrived from worlds unseen—her silks and linens kept, it seemed, the lingering sweetness, her body was still fair with the attars, of Paradise. She had the air, which is a distinction in itself, of belonging to no time, country, sect or class. She had been exquisitely her own until through the arcaded forests of life he had glimpsed her, seen her spirit fleeing like light through the leaves, wavering, pausing, at last with his own intermingling.

When he had pondered on her name in deep contentment for a considerable time he asked her to marry him. They were in the registry office, but he had taken the precaution of bolting the door so that clamant ladies could not trouble them. Only the storm moaned at the house corners and snuffed at the threshold. Inside were daffodils, warmth and a steaming kettle, reassuring and homely.

'What I am so thankful for is that you are so utterly alone,' he said. 'I gather that you have no near relations. You have an air of detachment.'

She assented.

'And at our first meeting I thought—from your ring, your black dress, your manner—that you were a widow. And I could not help being relieved by it, because complications are so damnable. I seem to want the rest of my life to be absolutely smooth.'

'Yes.'

'Was he killed—out there?'

The room was still as the centre of a fiery wheel, as water under ice, as a forgotten grave.

A sparrow, starving and desperate, flung itself violently against the window and fell across it, dead.

The face of Eucharis seemed ravaged by some secret, withheld thought, some conflict veiled as a drama enacted behind many curtains of gauze.

'Was he killed, Eucharis?'

'He went out in 1914. On his first leave we met and on the next we were married. That very day he was recalled.'

Richard sighed. It was obvious that the sigh was not one of sympathy but of thankfulness.

'Was he killed?'

She crouched close to the gas-fire, her slim shoulders bent beneath an invisible load; her tall, slight body, which always seemed to him to make a gown look like a calyx, acquired, under the influence of something in her mind, a suave sinuosity.

'After this, dear, we will never speak of him again. It troubles you. But I must know whether he is dead.'

A bleak and dreadful discontent, almost a hatred of her, of his love, seemed to be waiting at the back of his mind, waiting to submerge ecstasy, and love, and the daffodils, if she should answer 'No.'

'Yes,' she said, 'he is dead.'

Richard was too much relieved to speak.

She started up, and stood swaying, so that he thought her like those Chinese plants that spring into leaf and blossom in a moment.

'You look,' she cried out in a strained, irritable voice, 'as if you thought I'd lied—as if you were trying to detect me!'

'Lie?' he echoed. 'You could not lie. Lie? Why, if you could lie—'

'What then?'

'Heaven and Earth would break up and God would fall plumb like that dead bird.'

'Should you kill me, if I lied? Should you take your beautiful shining sword out of the scabbard, and kill me?'

'Eucharis!'

'Your eyes would kill me.'

'Eucharis, you're overwrought. It has been too much for you. We will never speak of him again.'

'Are you sure you would mind so much, if he were alive?'

'Mind? Why, my dear child, we could not be married. At least, not without endless unsavoury legalities, smut in newspapers. Why, Eucharis, here we are with a romance as perfect, as lovely as the *Vita Nuova*. I'd almost leave you rather than spoil it.'

'Never leave me, Richard!'

'No. Why should I? He is dead.'

She clung to him, and as a relief from their intensity he began to tell her rather apologetically of his possessions, his responsibilities, castles here and there, titles and sub-titles, privileges, obligations. She would be a great lady. She seemed almost terrified at the prospect. The wedding would be, of necessity, ceremonious. She must take her place in the world. And the poor little registry-office lady wept with such abandonment of grief that his words might have been her death-sentence.

But in time he reassured her.

'The past,' he said, 'exists no more. And in the future I shall be always near you.'

She said after him, as one telling over a list of treasures.

'The Past exists no more.'

And, after all, to a woman sensitive to everything beautiful, the new life came easily. Delicious colours, rare materials became, at a word from her, gowns like poems. She 'walked in beauty.' She became immediately part of the atmosphere, the central loveliness, of his life.

His relations were charmed with her, and one imaginative aunt invented for her a royal ancestry (in the female line and under the rose). He rushed her from place to place, restless until the final marriage arrangements were accomplished. His laugh was so ready, his whistle so gay, his face expressed such a deep fulfilment, that those who loved him were ecstatic. Old gentlemen, for whom romance had faded long ago, polished their spectacles and looked at

the lovers over the top of them, chuckled, blew their noses, harked back to the seventies. Young men of confirmed bachelor ways glanced at the lovers and at once went out and bought a nosegay for Miss Somebody of Somewhere. And the registry office, the war, wounds and dark weather, poverty, pain, cruelty, death and judgment had melted like tall clouds on a blue, sinless day of April.

It was early spring, four o'clock in the afternoon, and the day before he was to take her to himself for ever. Everything was ready. All the splendour and the ritual waited; their journey afterwards was planned to the uttermost golden hour. His house was full of spring flowers, and she, in a gown of pale gold, was the centre of radiance. She was, for the first time, dispensing tea in the fire-lit hall. She was dispensing it to him alone, and he took as well the blessing of lips and hands, for the delay had tried him. His love, which had waited half a lifetime, had something of the fierceness of starvation. The hall was rich with tapestries and old oak, tall clocks, armour, and a long, carved sword-cupboard over the mantel-piece. He was kneeling beside her, his arms about her, his head on her breast.

Suddenly, the bell rang. In the farther hall the butler's step could be heard.

Richard sat down, frowning.

'Why did you order tea here?' he asked. 'I would rather have had it where we could not be disturbed, beloved.'

'It was—the sword-cupboard,' she said. 'I wanted to remember—'

The butler was talking to someone.

An irritable, exasperated voice was arguing with him.

'I tell you, I *must* see her. Now. This minute. To-morrow? Oh, God! To-morrow won't save her. I've come to save her, I tell you! I've gone through—oh! I've gone through hell for her sake. I must see her—and the chap, Gledd.'

'Lord Gledd will not see you, young man,' said the butler, more grieved than angry. 'Nor yet the Marchioness of Gledd—as will be to-morrow—won't see you neither. And *all* the secretaries are that irritable I daren't go near them.'

'Secretaries? Fool! It's Gledd I've got to see. Here I come with a gift that's cost me—'

'A present, sir? Oh, I understand now, sir. It shall be listed with the rest, sir, and the secretary—'

But at this point the young man seemed to be going mad. A large, muscular hand shot out, and the butler violently retired. The young man walked in.

Richard stood on the hearthrug.

'Carry!' said the young man, 'I've come to give you your freedom. I've come to say everything shall be all right. But you must put off the wedding till the divorce is through, Gledd. Carry! Don't faint, my dear. Everything's as right as right. I knew something was up when you stopped writing to me in that infernal asylum. Nerve hospital! Not much! Then I saw your photos in the papers. Crikey, Carry, I *was* glad for you, though it hurt pretty well at first. I'd always hoped—— But that's nothing.'

There were tears in his eyes and his large, nervous hands were clenched.

'I always *said* you ought to be a great lady. And now you will! I *am* glad. I tell you it's a great day for me, this!'

He pulled out a hideous coloured handkerchief and wiped his eyes.

'I didn't know what to do for the best. I thought of keeping it dark. Then I thought only the straight thing was good enough for you, Carry. I tried to come sooner. But when I told that fool doctor my wife was going to marry a marquess, he smiled in the way that makes you see red, and ordered bromide. But I got away in the end. And here I am. And we can arrange it all, can't we, Gledd? It's only waiting a few weeks. Carry! Say I've done right! Say you're glad I've got free.' His voice was hoarse, pleading.

Richard had not taken his eyes from him.

'You are her husband?' he said quietly.

The young man took a marriage certificate from his pocket-book and gave it to him.

'And you were invalided home? Not thought to be killed?'

There was a pressing, whelming eagerness in the question.

'Killed? No. Wished I was. I was shell-shocked. They thought I should never get better.'

'And your wife—didn't think you were killed?'

'Carry? Lord, no! Carry was a brick. She wrote to me every week in that damned hole. Sent me things too. I say, she's going to faint, Gledd!'

Eucharis was standing by the great oak chair on the opposite side of the hearth from Richard. Above the mantelshelf was the dark, carved sword-cupboard. Dusk had thickened, blotting the many-tinted spring flowers to one grey.

Richard lifted his intense, omniscient-seeming gaze from the wild, honest, tear-smudged face of the intruder. Very deliberately he turned towards Eucharis, swaying in her sheath-like gown, greyish now the light had gone, against the dark background of unshuttered night. And as his look settled upon her there was in it the same icy, fiery dreadfulness that had been in it once when he court-martialled a man for robbing the wounded. Steely, unpitying, his eyes forced hers to look at him. No word was spoken. Only the unchangeable judgment of his never-betrayed ideals consumed her as their looks met beneath the sword-cupboard.

Suddenly she snatched her hands to her heart.

'The sword!' she cried, in a strange, chanting voice. 'Oh! it is the sword!'

She fell like a snapped lily, and Richard left her where she fell, for he knew that she was dead.

TRANSIENCE.

GRIEVE not that beauty is so transient,
That petals of the fairest rose must fall,
That Nature, lavish and improvident,
Has bid the seasons answer to the call
Of Time and let their flowing goblets spill
Ere we, athirst for more, can drink our fill.

Grieve not that cuckoos stay so short a time,
That swallows gather in the autumn sky
And southwards flock to seek a warmer clime;
They would not stir our hearts to ecstasy
When spring returns, if they were ever near.
It is the fleeting joy we hold most dear.

Grieve not that death must come ere you and I
Have tasted all the wonders of the earth.
Would life be aught if we could never die?
Should we not wearied grow, regret our birth?
For death it is, and fear of death that give
The keen uncertainty that makes us live.

HILDA M. SLADE.

'ALICE IN RECOVERYLAND.'

BY DENYS SMITH.

Readers of 'Alice in Wonderland' must often have felt that there was something more to it than a mere children's tale. 'Gulliver's Travels' was a satire on the age of Swift. But what could be the inner meaning of Alice's adventures? The opening words of the book, 'Alice was beginning to grow very tired of sitting with her sister on the Bank . . .,' supply a clue. Is not the conversation at the Mad Hatter's tea-party very like that heard whenever American economists gather together? The garden Alice sought is obviously Prosperity. Alice's experiments in being different sizes show clearly the dangers of Inflation and Deflation. If Lewis Carroll had been a little more explicit and had known his United States better, his tale might have run somewhat as follows :

ALICE was beginning to get very tired of sitting waiting for her father at the Bank with nothing to do, when a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

'Oh dear, oh dear,' he muttered to himself, 'I shall be late with my resignation.' He took a watch from his waistcoat pocket and looked at it anxiously. Alice, who had never seen a White Rabbit wear a waistcoat before, jumped up and followed him.

She found herself in a kind of hot-house filled with plants and ferns. 'Fancy finding a place like this in a Bank,' she exclaimed out loud.

'If a Bank has a Conservator of course it has a Conservatory,' said the White Rabbit, who had overheard her remark. 'But what are you doing here?'

'I was waiting to be taken out to dinner by my father as a birthday treat,' Alice answered. 'I wonder if you could tell me what time it is?'

The White Rabbit held out his watch to Alice, who saw that it wasn't a watch at all, but a big gold coin. It began to chime very gently as she looked at it.

'Sound money,' said the White Rabbit proudly.

'It doesn't seem to be of much use,' said Alice.

'Oh, my fur and whiskers,' cried the White Rabbit, 'she's another of them,' and he disappeared down a hole at the foot of one of the plants.

Without thinking or quite knowing how she managed it, Alice followed him. She found herself falling, but so gently she was not at all frightened. She fluttered from side to side like a piece of paper dropped from a high window and landed with hardly a bump near a little glass door which lead into the most lovely garden she had ever seen. 'This must be the place all the grown-ups have been trying to find,' thought Alice. 'Prosperity couldn't possibly be any nicer. But how can I get inside?'

There was a table near her and on it she found a small key and two bottles. One bottle was labelled 'Inflation' and the other 'Deflation.' Alice remembered that when she blew up her balloon her father told her she was inflating it. 'So since I want to be smaller,' said Alice, 'I'll drink from the Deflation bottle.' After first looking to see that it wasn't labelled 'poison' she took a drink. Almost immediately something hit her very hard on the head. It was the ceiling. 'That's very funny,' said Alice to herself, 'after a dose of Deflation I grow bigger. Now let's try Inflation and see what happens.'

Alice was more careful this time and sipped very slowly. 'Curiouser and curiouser,' she thought as the ceiling seemed to shoot upwards. She kept on sipping till she felt she was small enough to enter the gate to Prosperity Garden. 'Now to see what it's like,' she cried gaily, then suddenly burst into tears. She had left the key on the table, and it was now high out of reach!

'This isn't at all like you to cry so easily,' she told herself. 'I wonder if it's because you aren't you any more,' and she began to cry all the harder at the thought. 'I wonder if I can remember the things I used to know. Twice three are four, twice five are six, and the capital of Paris is in London and the capital of London is in Washington. It seems all wrong.'

She was about to start crying again when the White Rabbit hurried past her.

'White Rabbit,' she shouted, 'how can I get into the garden?'

'Follow me,' answered the White Rabbit without stopping.

Alice started to run after him, but bumped into an old lady whom she had never seen before.

'I beg your pardon,' said Alice, 'but I'm looking for Prosperity Garden.'

'Well, it's just as well you ran into me,' said the old lady, 'and not into that Republican hussy. Still, you needn't have run into me quite so hard. When you're as old a Party as I am you can't stand it.'

'Are you so very old?' Alice couldn't help asking.

'Over a hundred years,' said the old lady proudly, 'but Dame Democracy still has plenty of followers.'

'I see you are ten,' she added, looking at Alice closely through her lorgnettes.

Alice thought this very clever till she noticed that her new green birthday dress was covered all over with tens, some in letters and some in figures. In fact its pattern was just like that of a ten-dollar note. Alice was so taken aback that she shivered a little.

'Heavens, child, I hope you're not frozen,' said Dame Democracy in alarm. 'You can never tell these days what will happen to you in a Bank.'

'No,' said Alice, 'but I *do* seem to have been changed.'

'You've not been changed,' the old lady assured her. 'You're still ten.'

'I'm sure something has happened to me,' Alice insisted. 'I don't seem to remember things any more.'

'Repeat "You are old, Uncle Samuel",' said Dame Democracy.

She pronounced it 'Sam Yule' as though he was some relation of Santa Claus, but Alice knew what she meant, so folded her hands and began:

"You are old, Uncle Samuel," the young man said,
"And have hoarded your gold by the ton.
And yet one would think you were deep in the red.
Why not get it out and have fun?"

"In my youth," said the sage, "I could never conceive
That when older I'd be out of debt
And though I'm now rich, so you'd have me believe,
I am hardly convinced of it yet."

"You are steady," dear Uncle, "that's why, I suppose,
You are able, when people don't nudge it,
To balance an eel on the end of your nose.
But why don't you balance your budget?"

"I juggled with figures," the Ancient opined,
"In my youth, though now I'm not able,
Compared with these monetary twistings I find
That an eel is remarkably stable."

"You are wise, Uncle Samuel," the young man said.
"Let me now put your brains to the proof.
Why do some of your household go hungry to bed
When your larder is stocked to the roof?"

"The laws of supply and demand," said the Sage,
"Would no doubt explain these affairs.
But you can't understand them at your tender age
So be off, or I'll kick you downstairs."

'You see,' said Alice, 'it all comes out wrong. And now could you please tell me the way to Prosperity Garden. The White Rabbit was going to show me, but he's disappeared.'

'I'm not so sure that I should trust him,' said Dame Democracy. 'Of course you might learn from Tweedledum and Tweedledee over there, or at the Professor's Tea-party over there, then there's—but if you let me show you the way—I'll give you jam every other day.'

'I don't want any jam now, thank you,' said Alice.

'You couldn't have it even if you did,' said the old lady. 'The rule is: Jam to-morrow and jam yesterday—but never jam to-day.'

'But you said . . .'

'I said "Jam every other day" and how can to-day be another day? Don't stand there arguing, but come along.'

She seized Alice by the hand and they began to run.

'Faster, faster,' cried Dame Democracy.

'But we're not moving,' gasped Alice, who noticed that the scenery still remained the same.

'Of course not,' said the old lady. 'Faster, faster, or we'll never keep up.'

Alice did her best, but little by little she lost ground and began to move backwards.

The old lady vanished in the distance and Alice sank to the ground tired out.

Two funny fat schoolboys were standing close by her under a big umbrella, shaped like the dome of the Capitol in Washington.

'Tweedledum and Tweedledee, of course,' said Alice to herself. 'I shall ask them to help me.'

'Please,' she asked, 'can you show me the way to Prosperity Garden?'

Tweedledee looked at her in surprise. 'Is the Honourable Girl recognised?' he said at length. 'You know, Honourable Girl, you're not supposed to speak until you're recognised.'

'I'm sorry,' said Alice, 'I didn't know . . .'

'That alters matters,' interrupted Tweedledum. 'Come under the umbrella.'

'Will the Honourable Boy yield,' Tweedledee asked his brother.

'For what purpose,' said Tweedledum.

'For a question,' said Tweedledee.

'I yield,' said Tweedledum.

'I should like to know what the Honourable Girl is doing here,' Tweedledee said.

'Will you please tell me how to get to Prosperity Garden,' Alice replied patiently, feeling that they were doing a most unnecessary amount of talking.

Tweedledum raised his arm. 'I point with pride . . .' he began when Tweedledee interrupted and shouted, 'Will the Honourable Boy yield?'

'I yield to no man,' Tweedledum shouted back angrily.

'I view with alarm,' shrieked Tweedledee.

'Please, please don't quarrel on my account,' begged Alice.

'A Parliamentary enquiry,' said Tweedledee, calming down.

'The Honourable Boy will state it,' said Tweedledum.

'Since the Honourable Girl does not come from this country she is a foreign relation and I look after her.'

'I object. The Honourable Girl is a financial problem, so I deal with her.'

'She isn't,' said Tweedledum, forgetting to be polite and putting his tongue out.

'She is,' said Tweedledee, putting his fingers to his nose.

'They'll begin to fight in a minute,' thought Alice, 'and I shall certainly get nowhere if I stand listening to them.'

She began to run in the direction in which Tweedledum had pointed with pride, and very soon came to the spot where the Professor's Tea-party was being held. The table was very large and there was plenty of room, but four people sat crowded at one end.

'I wonder if any of you could tell me where Prosperity Garden is to be found,' Alice asked.

'It's just around the corner,' said somebody.

'But I don't see any corner,' said Alice.

'That's why you can't find it,' said the voice, which Alice saw came from a Grey Squirrel.

'He's no more right to be here than you have,' explained the Mad Hatter, 'but he's very fond of nuts.'

'May I take a seat?' asked Alice, who suddenly realised that she was feeling very hungry.

'No,' said the Mad Hatter, 'but you may sit down and take a piece of cake.'

'Give her a piece of cake, Professor.' The Mad Hatter turned to a man Alice had at first mistaken for a Farmer, but who was wearing, she now noticed, a Professor's cap and gown.

The Professor reached over the Doormouse, who was fast asleep, and put the cake on Alice's plate.

'All change,' shouted the Mad Hatter just as she was about to eat it.

Everybody moved up one place, except the Doormouse.

'This is a Progressive Party,' explained the Mad Hatter. 'The Doormouse doesn't play. He used to talk a lot, but nobody listened, so now he sleeps most of the time. Anyway, he's not very Progressive. Have some tea.'

'The teapot's empty,' said Alice as she tried to pour herself a cup.

'Of course it is,' said the Grey Squirrel. 'If a tea-party is Progressive, it's advanced; and when a tea-party's advanced, there's never any more tea left.'

'All change,' shouted the Mad Hatter.

Alice's piece of cake was growing farther and farther away, but she was getting very near a dish of sausages. She hoped there'd be some left by the time she reached them.

'I vote the young lady tells us a story,' said the Grey Squirrel.

'You tell one first,' said Alice.

'The fourty-fourth,' replied the Grey Squirrel.

'That's not a story, that's a floor,' objected the Mad Hatter.

'Nearly everything nearly everybody says is full of flaws,' said the Professor. 'Let's hear the little girl's story.'

Partly to escape from telling it, and partly to get nearer the sausages which had all been eaten but one, Alice herself

shouted 'All change,' and was relieved to find that everybody moved.

In fact they made such a noise changing that they woke the Doormouse, who began singing in a sleepy voice :

'Twinkle twinkle little coin,
How I wonder where you're goin',
Down into the deep you drop
Like a star pushed off the top.'

'He's quite mad,' said the Professor, hitting him over the head with the teapot to send him to sleep again. 'He was led astray by the White Rabbit.'

Alice was having great trouble with her sausage. Whenever she put out her hand to take it the sausage slipped away.

'Dear little sausage,' said Alice, beckoning to it coaxingly.

'If it's dear, how much will you give for it?' asked the Professor.

'I'd give anything for it,' sighed Alice.

'Tut, tut, that's far too much for a sausage,' said the Professor.

'But when you want a thing very much, and there aren't many of them, of course you're ready to give a lot for it,' Alice said, rather surprised to find herself arguing with a Professor.

'You're out of date,' said the Professor. 'We discarded that theory a long time ago. Let me see the Commodity Index.' He took a Thermometer out of his pocket and looked at it closely. 'She undoubtedly needs correcting,' he said.

'Please, no,' protested Alice, who was beginning to feel a little frightened. 'I promise I'll be as good as gold.'

'Exactly, that's why you need correcting,' said the Professor.

'Let's cut her in half,' suggested the Mad Hatter.

'I think we'd better,' said the Professor, rising to his feet.

Alice would have been far too scared to move if they had actually tried to cut her in two, but all the Professor did was to wave the Thermometer over her head and recite very solemnly indeed :

'Mumbo-jumbo, I decree,
You're the half of what you be,
Hotsy-totsy, hotcha cha,
Now you're half of what you are.'

At the end everybody banged their cups on the table and cried, 'Prosit.'

'You see, you don't want the sausage nearly so much now,' said the Professor, after a long pause.

'But I do,' said Alice.

'Nonsense. If you did I should be wrong, so obviously you don't,' said the Professor rather testily.

'I've been trying to explain the same thing for years,' remarked the Mad Hatter. 'I remember a little English girl, with the same name as yours, came to tea once. She was just as stupid.'

'I'm not stupid, I'm hungry,' said Alice.

'I think I can attend to that,' said the Mad Hatter, pulling out his watch.

'What time do you have your dinner?' he asked.

'One o'clock,' said Alice.

The Mad Hatter turned the watchhands. 'It is now five minutes to one,' he said.

'Now what time do you finish?'

'Two o'clock,' said Alice.

The Mad Hatter turned the hands of the watch again. 'Now it's two o'clock. Dinner's over. You're not hungry any more. Please say grace.'

'I am hungry,' said Alice stubbornly.

'We'll never make an economist of her, I'm afraid,' said the Mad Hatter to the Professor.

'Let me try,' answered the Professor, taking an egg from his pocket.

'I shall now explain to you all about eggs,' he began.

'What is the use of that?' said Alice.

'Columbus studied eggs, and see where he got to,' the Mad Hatter reminded her.

'All I know is that I should like to eat one,' Alice told him. She tried to snatch the egg from the Professor, but it fell on to the table and began spinning round.

It seemed to grow bigger and bigger and more and more human as it span, while the people round the table grew fainter and fainter. Before they finally disappeared Alice saw the Professor and the Mad Hatter putting the Doormouse into the teapot.

She was now standing in front of a high wall, on top of which the egg was still spinning. As it gradually came to a stop Alice noticed that instead of being white, or brown, it was entirely red.

'Why, it must be Hum——'

'Humski-Dumski Himself,' said the figure on the wall, interrupting her.

'Why are you spinning round like that?' asked Alice.

'To show I'm a revolutionary,' said Humski. 'It's surprising you recognised me so soon,' he added. 'Some people look at me for sixteen years before they recognise me.'

'Why?' asked Alice.

'To see if I'd fall,' replied Humski. 'They'd been reading capitalist nursery rhymes. You remember "Humski-Dumski had a great fall." But I abolished all nursery rhymes, so here I stay. Not that I disagree with literature. In fact I frequently make it up myself, for example.

'But he was very stiff and proud
He said, "I think you shout too loud."

And he was very proud and stiff
He said, "I'd recognise you if——"

I asked him why the door was shut
He said, "I'd turn the handle but——"

I asked him why he was so slow
He said, "Maybe you're dangerous so——"

He came to a sudden stop and Alice stared at him in surprise. 'Why do you stand up there looking down at me in that funny way?' asked Humski.

'I'm standing down looking up at you,' said Alice.

'Wrong again,' replied Humski. 'I've made "down" up, and "up" down—as an additional precaution against falling, you know.'

'You can't make words mean what you like,' said Alice.

'When I use a word,' said Humski scornfully, 'it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less. You should try it. It comes in very useful. Especially when you've made inconvenient promises.'

'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean whatever you like.'

'The question is,' said Humski, 'shall we submit any longer to tyrants? And words are the worst tyrants of all.'

Alice was far too puzzled to say anything, so after a moment Humski began again.

'Another thing that's wrong with you is your shape.'

'Well,' said Alice indignantly, 'you're just like an egg yourself. You haven't any head, in fact you're no shape at all.'

'That's the very best shape,' said Humpty. 'It's rather capitalistic to have a head.' He spun round gently once or twice to emphasise this last point.

'Now it's your turn to answer me,' he said to Alice. 'What are you doing here?'

'I'm looking for Prosperity Garden,' said Alice. 'Can you tell me how to get there?'

'Yes, I can,' said Humski, licking a curiously shaped piece of candy he held in his hand, like a hammer stuck crossways on to a curved knife.

Alice asked him what it was.

'It's a Gosplan,' said Humski. 'I suck it because it's rather hard to swallow.'

Alice decided it was time to end the conversation and be on her way. 'I asked you how to get to Prosperity Garden a little while ago . . .' she began.

'You did not,' Humski interrupted. 'You asked if I could *tell* you how to get there. If you really want to know *how* to get there, the answer is, come and sit on the wall with me.'

'No, thank you,' Alice answered, 'I'm not so good at balancing as you are.'

'Come along,' coaxed Humski. 'We'll hold hands and be Gosplan suckers together.'

'I'm going to look for my garden,' said Alice very firmly.

'Then wait and hear a very original song,' Humski begged.

He began to sing in a deep bass voice ('It must be because his mouth is so near his stomach,' Alice thought to herself):

'It's no fun at all
Sitting on a wall
All by yourself with a Gosplan.
It's not so swell,
Keeping in your shell,
All by yourself with a Gosplan.'

'I've heard the tune before and the words aren't very original,' Alice told him.

'You shouldn't say things like that,' cried Humski angrily. 'You should let me have all the credit I want. If there's one thing I must have it's credit. Lots and lots of credit.'

He began to spin round very angrily indeed. Alice grew quite giddy watching him.

She was shutting her eyes and opening them trying to get rid of the dizzy feeling when she heard a shout of, 'Check, check.'

A White Knight charged across the field and pulled up his horse just in front of her, nearly falling off as he did so. 'Steady there, Nira, steady,' he shouted to his steed.

A Red Knight, whom Alice did not see at first because his suit of armour was almost the same colour as the red earth, pulled up his horse beside the White Knight, with a cry of 'Woa there, Agra.'

'You're ahead of me again,' the Red Knight grumbled to the White Knight, 'and you know that I ought to be ahead of you. We'll never get anywhere if we go on like this.'

But the White Knight took no notice. He kept on pointing to Alice and crying 'Check, check.'

'It's rude to point and I'm not a check,' said Alice.

'Make a note of it,' the White Knight told the Red.

'I can't, it's a note already,' replied the Red Knight.

The White Knight looked closely at Alice. 'Quite right, so it is,' he agreed.

'I don't like the way you speak about me as though I wasn't real,' Alice protested.

'You're not, except in the White King's dream,' said the White Knight. 'You're just a thought in his head. If he changes his mind you change. That's all there is to it.'

'I am real,' said Alice, beginning to cry.

'You won't make yourself any realer by crying,' said the White Knight. 'If the White King wants to change his mind tears won't stop him any more than the waves stopped King Canute.'

Alice, who was very good at history, remembered that the waves *did* stop King Canute. 'If he's wrong about one thing perhaps he's wrong about the other,' she told herself. 'In fact I may be the one who is dreaming.'

This last idea so cheered her up that she was able to study the two Knights more closely.

The Red Knight had a collection of garden tools tied round his saddle while a large telescope hung round his neck. The White Knight was carrying an even more curious assortment of objects, among them a bee-hive and a ladder.

'I see you are examining our weapons,' said the Red Knight.

'This telescope, now, is very useful for exploring every avenue. This (he pointed to a tool like a pick-axe) I use for leaving no stone unturned.'

'My instruments are even more useful,' said the White Knight. 'And most of them are my own invention. This ladder, for example, is a great help in climbing out of depressions.'

'I don't see the use of a bee-hive,' said Alice.

'Well, you see,' explained the White Knight, 'I keep meeting people with bees in their bonnets. The bees must have some place to go.'

'And what are those funny things on your horse's feet?'

'The anklets,' replied the White Knight, 'are to keep off the sharks. Then, instead of horseshoes, I use magnets. My own invention.'

'Why?' asked Alice.

'To get the better of the chiselers. When they creep up, the magnets draw the chisels out of their hands, and then I crack down on them.'

'But I must be on my way. Come along there, Nira.'

'There he goes,' grumbled the Red Knight, as the White Knight rode unsteadily away, 'getting in front again. He forgets he can't get there unless I'm in front.'

'Get where?' asked Alice. 'Not Prosperity Garden, by any chance.'

'I expect so,' said the Red Knight, 'if only we can keep the proper distance. And then, of course, we have to follow the charts.'

'And the charts show you which way to go?' Alice asked.

'We draw the charts to show where we think we've been,' said the Red Knight a little vaguely, 'and then after a time perhaps we shall be able to see where we are going. It's very hard work. How much work have you done to-day?'

'None at all,' said Alice.

'What a lot of money you must get paid,' said the Red Knight.

'But you don't get paid for doing nothing,' said Alice. 'The more work you do, the more money you get. That's common sense.'

'I was talking about farming,' said the Red Knight.

'But come along, I must overtake the White Knight.' He nearly fell off as his horse started to trot.

'Neither of them seem to be very used to their horses,' Alice

said to herself. 'I wonder if there's any quicker way of getting to the garden.'

Just then she noticed the White Rabbit hurrying along to the right of her. 'He certainly seemed to know,' she thought and began to run after him.

Just as she had caught him she felt the Red Knight's hand on her shoulder. 'Don't you want to come along with me after all?' said the Red Knight, shaking her gently. As he shook her the White Rabbit grew smaller and smaller, till it was as small as the paper weight shaped like a rabbit on her father's desk.

In fact it *was* the paper weight. And when she turned to look at the Red Knight he changed before her very eyes into her own father.

'So it was my dream after all,' Alice whispered, rubbing her eyes and sighing a little. 'Stay there on Daddy's desk, little White Rabbit. Some day we shall find that Garden together.'

Washington, D.C.

THE REGISTERED LETTER.

A VILLAGE COMEDY.

BY E. V. LUCAS.

SCENE 1.—*Lesser Widdling General Shop and Post Office.*

The postmistress, the widow PEEK, is handing to THOMAS BURDEN, the postman, the morning mail, examining the postcards as she does so.

MRS. PEEK. Here's something with a Birmingham postmark for that Grayson girl. I wonder who she knows there?

THOMAS BURDEN. Is it a man's handwriting or a woman's?

MRS. PEEK. Looks to me like a man's.

BURDEN. Some young spark, I suppose. It's time she got engaged, anyway.

MRS. PEEK. Time, yes! But look at the way she goes about it.

BURDEN. The girl's all right. We're only young once.

MRS. PEEK. I can't remember that she's ever had a letter from Birmingham before (*turns over a postcard*). The Vicar's niece is coming on a visit, I see. 'Arriving at 4.35,' she says. Just in time for tea. And here's one for Mrs. Thursby saying that her son at Milford thinks he's got a customer for her cow at last. That'll be a great relief to her, poor soul. And perhaps she'll think now about settling her account with me.

BURDEN (*sorting the mail into his satchel*). Is that all?

MRS. PEEK. Yes, off you go. Oh no! Wait a minute. There's something very important. I was forgetting. (*Goes to safe.*) Here's a registered letter that came last night when I was so busy. It's addressed in the strangest way I ever remember: 'To the Most Honest Person in Lesser Widdling.' Now what are we to do about that? Registered, too.

BURDEN. Registered, yes, that makes it a real corker. It might have a fortune in it. We must be very careful how we deliver that. What do you think?

MRS. PEEK. I think it needs thought. One can't pick out the most honest person anywhere in a hurry, let alone this part of the

world. 'Most honest'—that's a twister. And yet, why, it might be meant for me! No one can say I ever did anyone, can they? Can they? Why don't you speak, Thomas?

BURDEN. I was just wondering. Would you care to have all your customers cross-examined about it? There's some who talk about short weight. You aren't called 'Pinch Plum' for nothing!

MRS. PEEK. 'Pinch Plum' indeed! But a poor widow must live. And what about them that never pay their bills?

BURDEN. I wasn't making any charges. I was only repeating what I've heard. And now we're talking like this, let me say I've often wondered if it's exactly honest to read postcards.

MRS. PEEK. I don't see any harm in that. And anyway you do it too.

BURDEN. Never mind about me. I'm not calling myself honest. But anyway—(*turning the letter over*)—what's to be done about this? Someone's got to have it.

MRS. PEEK. You must decide. It's your job. It's what you get your wages for, delivering letters to the addresses on them. (*She laughs.*) But if you're so doubtful about it, leave it to me. I'm in a position to know who's honest here better than most. Let me lock it up again till we can discuss it more quietly. (*She stretches out her hand a thought too eagerly.*)

BURDEN. No. It's in my charge. (*Puts it in his inside pocket.*) You're quite right: it's my job to find the owner.

MRS. PEEK. Yes, but it would be better if while you're making up your mind the letter was in a safe place. It might have thousands of pounds in it.

BURDEN. That's what I was thinking.

SCENE 2.—*The Village Street.*

THE VICAR. Hullo, Thomas, I wanted to see you. What's all this I hear about a letter?

BURDEN. You mean the registered letter, sir? Here it is. (*Holding it out, but retaining it.*)

THE VICAR (*reading the superscription and reaching out his hand for it*). Why didn't you deliver it to me at once?

BURDEN. To you? But why should I?

THE VICAR. Because it's so obviously meant for me. Isn't your vicar, your spiritual head, the most honest person in any village?

BURDEN. I shouldn't like to deny it.

THE VICAR. I should think not. Then why the delay?

BURDEN. Well, sir, I was thinking perhaps someone not so clever as a clergyman was meant. Someone simpler, who hasn't been to college, and isn't, so to speak, paid to be good. I was saying just the same to Mr. Meekling down at the chapel. Like you, he said it was meant for him.

THE VICAR. That, of course, is absurd. You were right to bring it to me.

BURDEN. But I didn't exactly bring it, sir. You asked me for it.

THE VICAR. Yes, yes, but the fact that I am clever, as you are kind enough to say, can't affect the case. Surely if cleverness is an obstacle to honesty, the fact that I am respected as I am in this parish is additional proof that I have preserved my integrity and behaved myself. Tell me who is more honest than I.

BURDEN. That's what I've got to find out, sir.

THE VICAR. What's the postmark?

BURDEN. London, W., sir.

THE VICAR. I have many friends there: an additional suggestion that it may be for me.

BURDEN. Hm. If that's from a friend of yours, why should he be so roundabout in his methods, sir? Why shouldn't he send the money to you direct?

THE VICAR. Money? You're sure there's money in it?

BURDEN. Not at all. But there often is in registered letters.

THE VICAR. Anyway, since you seem to have suspicions, tell me why I am not honest enough for you.

BURDEN. I shouldn't like to do that, sir. Indeed, I don't say you're not honest. But somehow it never occurred to me that it was you the letter was meant for. Any more than for Mr. Meekling down at the chapel. Why, I'd sooner hand it over to old Hickory, the cobbler.

THE VICAR. But he's a free-thinker.

BURDEN. Yes, that's what I mean. It takes something that might be honesty to call yourself a free-thinker in a village like this, and there's no question of being paid for it either. In fact, he loses by admitting it. But, all the same, I couldn't deliver the letter to him; his leather's too poor. No really honest man would sole-and-heel like he does.

THE VICAR. No, of course he couldn't have it. But you haven't

given me any good reason why I shouldn't. Tell me now why you don't think I'm honest.

BURDEN. I didn't say you weren't honest, sir. I think you are, within bounds. But this letter isn't addressed merely to an honest person within bounds; it's addressed to 'The Most Honest Person.' I couldn't call you the Most Honest Person.

THE VICAR. Why not?

BURDEN. Well, I'd rather not go into particulars.

THE VICAR. Please, Thomas. Don't mind my feelings. Say what's wrong with me.

BURDEN. Well, sir, the Bible. Do you really believe everything that's in it? That Jonah business, for example?

THE VICAR. What has Jonah to do with it?

BURDEN. Only this, sir, that if you don't believe it all and yet lead your congregation to suppose that you do, this letter is not for you.

THE VICAR. But that's only a detail; quite superficial. Honesty is a matter of personal character in daily life.

BURDEN. No, sir, I couldn't deliver the letter to a parson. I'm sorry, but there it is.

THE VICAR. And you are the sole judge?

BURDEN. I am the postman, sir. It's my job.

THE VICAR. A pity. There should be a committee formed to adjudicate on a point like this. I must write to the Postmaster-General about it.

BURDEN. I wish you would, sir. But I doubt if you'd get any help there. You'd only get an acknowledgment.

THE VICAR. Have you considered the claims of my wife?

BURDEN. No, sir. I never thought of her.

THE VICAR. But surely——

BURDEN. I'm sorry, sir, she never came into my mind. In fact, I doubt if it's meant for a woman at all.

THE VICAR. Wouldn't you have considered your own wife's claims if she'd still been alive?

BURDEN. Certainly not, sir. A good woman and a kind, but she used to go through my pockets.

THE VICAR. So you don't think women are capable of being honest at all?

BURDEN. Not 'most honest,' anyway. Do you?

THE VICAR (*looking at his watch*). Well, Thomas, I must be going. I have an important engagement. I think you're a very

wilful, obstinate man and I hope that that letter contains only the smallest possible postal order. (*Moves off.*)

BURDEN. Good-day, sir.

THE VICAR. But I respect you, Thomas.

BURDEN. Thank you, sir.

THE VICAR (*returning*). By the way, what about your own qualifications for the letter? I'm not so sure you oughtn't to deliver it to yourself.

BURDEN. Oh no, sir, I wish I could. But that's out of the question. There are lots of things against me.

THE VICAR. Nonsense!

BURDEN. There are. Why, one day only last week when there was a letter for Mr. Hackworth over the hill—you know, sir, the farthest point on my round—I kept it back till the next morning just because I was tired. That wasn't honest, was it? Not when I'm paid to deliver everything on each round.

THE VICAR. Well, it was not strictly right, I admit. But if you've never done anything worse than that—

BURDEN. Oh, I have, sir. I have. I'm not safe with match-boxes, for instance. I can't keep my hands off them. Oh no. I'm not qualified. Moderately honest I may be, but not the real thing.

THE VICAR. You don't know what's in the letter?

BURDEN. No, sir.

THE VICAR. You wouldn't steam it open?

BURDEN. Certainly not, sir.

THE VICAR. But the idea crossed your mind?

BURDEN. Most things cross our minds, sir.

THE VICAR. True, true. But what about Mrs. Peek at the post office, wouldn't she?

BURDEN. I shouldn't care to trust her. But I don't think she had when she gave it to me, and it hasn't been out of my possession since.

THE VICAR. Well, see that you keep it safely.

BURDEN. I shall, sir.

THE VICAR. Haven't you any idea at all what you're going to do with it?

BURDEN. I must try everybody, sir. I mean everybody likely.

THE VICAR. Yes—and then?

BURDEN. Ah, that's the problem.

THE VICAR. Thomas, I believe you'll have to come back to

me as the rightful recipient, after all. And even if you can't think I ought to have it, think what an excellent thing for the Church it would be.

BURDEN. I must try everyone else first. But you must be hurrying on now, sir, or you'll be late for that appointment.

THE VICAR (*blankly*). Appointment? Oh yes. Good-day, Thomas.

SCENE 3.—*At the Hall.*

LADY BOUNTIFUL. Well, Thomas, you've been a long time coming to me. Where is the letter?

BURDEN. Here, my Ladyship (*slaps his pocket*).

LADY BOUNTIFUL. Well? (*Extending her hand.*)

BURDEN. No, my Ladyship. Not after that little turn-up at Dover Harbour with the Customs.

LADY BOUNTIFUL. What do you mean? I explained everything.

BURDEN. But you were fined, my Ladyship.

LADY BOUNTIFUL. A mistake, a stupid mistake. I had no more idea that I was making a false declaration than that I was an acrobat. Besides, what's a little smuggling, anyway? No, Thomas, if you find anyone in Lesser Widdling more honest than I am, you'll be clever. So let me have it.

BURDEN. I'm sorry, my Ladyship.

LADY BOUNTIFUL. You've never done any poaching, I suppose?

BURDEN. I don't see what that's got to do with it, my Ladyship. It's your smuggling that we're discussing. I'm sorry.

LADY BOUNTIFUL. You're a very obstinate, self-righteous man, and I've half a mind to tell a friend of mine in the Government about you.

BURDEN. I wish you would, my Ladyship. It would be a novelty for him.

SCENE 4.—*Thomas Burden's doorstep.*

HARRY CLOVER (*a young labourer*). I've come for that letter.

BURDEN. What letter?

HARRY CLOVER. The one with money in it addressed to The Most Honest Person in Lesser Widdling.

BURDEN. Do you think it's meant for you?

HARRY CLOVER. For me? (*laughs*). NO, not for me. Nor

yet my missus. But the baby born last night—surely there can't be anyone honester than a new-born babe?

BURDEN. I don't know. It needs thinking about.

HARRY CLOVER. Not at all. How can a new-born babe be anything but honest?

BURDEN. That's just it—new-born. I don't think I ought to take count of honesty that merely means not being dishonest. Honesty has got to come out on the right side, after there has been temptation. Your child isn't honest, it's just nothing; it hasn't begun yet. And, by the way, what sex is it?

HARRY CLOVER. It's a girl.

BURDEN. Hm. Anyway, I couldn't give the letter to a new-born babe.

HARRY CLOVER. How do you know what the sender of the letter means? You take a lot on yourself, don't you? My wife is counting on getting that money.

BURDEN. Ah, and that's another thing. The sender of this letter meant it for the person it was addressed to, not for anyone's mother. No, I couldn't give it to her.

HARRY CLOVER. Supposing the baby had been a boy, what then?

BURDEN. No, not even then.

HARRY CLOVER. Well, I call it a darned swindle. I made sure you'd have handed it over.

SCENE 5.—*In the tap-room of the 'Blue Boar.'*

PUBLICAN. Still got that letter, Mr. Burden?

BURDEN. Yes, here it is (*slaps his breast pocket*).

PUBLICAN. Aren't you ever going to give it to its rightful owner?

BURDEN. Surely, directly I can find one.

PUBLICAN. What about me?

BURDEN. You!

PUBLICAN. Well, why not? What's the matter with me?

BURDEN. You never crossed my mind.

PUBLICAN. Well, let me cross it now. Tell me how I'm crooked.

BURDEN. You don't have to be crooked not to get this letter. You have only to be not honest enough.

PUBLICAN. Well, tell me where I'm wrong.

BURDEN. Look at your beer. Is that worth what you charge for it?

PUBLICAN. I'm not allowed to sell it for less. And it's not me who makes it, it's the brewers.

BURDEN. But you work for them, don't you? Would a 'most honest' man work for swindlers?

PUBLICAN. Haven't we got to live?

BURDEN. Of course. But we don't necessarily get registered letters. You want it both ways.

SCENE 6.—*At the Doctor's Dispensary.*

BURDEN. Excuse me, sir, but I suppose you've heard about the registered letter?

THE DOCTOR. Good Lord, yes.

BURDEN. And you may have wondered why I haven't brought it to you?

THE DOCTOR. Good Lord, no. I've filled up too many six-ounce bottles with coloured water to have any illusions about my honesty. I spend half my time disguising the truth, as every doctor must if he wants to keep his practice. Don't worry about me, Burden.

BURDEN. Thank you, sir. I shouldn't have spoken, only I didn't want you to feel slighted.

THE DOCTOR. Good Lord, no. Honoured, Burden, honoured.

SCENE 7.—*The Post Office again.*

MRS. PEEK. You've still got that letter?

BURDEN. Yes, darn it.

MRS. PEEK. What are you doing about it?

BURDEN. Thinking.

MRS. PEEK. Shouldn't we make a list and go through it together?

BURDEN. I made one. Here (*draws it from his pocket*).

MRS. PEEK. But the names are all crossed through.

BURDEN. Yes, I heard something about them. They're not even honest, let alone 'most honest.'

MRS. PEEK. The only one not crossed through is the poor natural's.

BURDEN. I know. But we couldn't give a letter, addressed like this, to the village idiot. It would look too bad. We should be the laughing-stock of the countryside.

MRS. PEEK. Why?

BURDEN. It would be so rough on the rest of us—you included—if the most honest person here was one out of his mind.

MRS. PEEK. Yes, I see. But it's beginning to look as if 'honest' doesn't mean very much. I mean it looks as if one could be quite an ordinary wrong un and still be honest enough.

BURDEN. Yes, it's dreadful. I wish the letter had never come here. I can't sleep. I'm losing weight. It's too much responsibility for an ordinary postman.

SCENE 8.—*In the Village Street.*

P.C. JONES. Just a word with you, Mr. Burden. I wish you'd hurry up with that registered letter. The longer you wait before you deliver it, the worse it is for me. Yes, and for the Force in general and the country at large.

BURDEN. Why?

P.C. JONES. Because naturally the first person you ought to have thought of to deliver it to is the village constable. Well, you didn't think of him, and I don't say I'm blaming you; but it's unfortunate you didn't, or couldn't. See what I mean?

BURDEN. Yes, I'm sorry.

P.C. JONES. Well, the mischief's done now, I'm afraid. But it would be kind of you to hurry things up and get it all forgotten.

BURDEN. You couldn't help me to find the right person, I suppose?

P.C. JONES. No, I couldn't. I'm out for the other thing.

SCENE 9.—*A public meeting in Lesser Widdling Village Hall.*

The chair is taken by SIR HERCULES BYNG, J.P., and everybody is present.

SIR HERCULES BYNG. Ladies and Gentlemen, we are met this evening to come to a decision about the mysterious registered letter which arrived in this village some few weeks ago addressed to 'The Most Honest Resident' here, and which is still undelivered (*ironical cheers*). As you know, the delicate task of deciding upon the fitting recipient has rested in the hands of your worthy postman, Thomas Burden (*loud laughter*); and it is because, after weighing the claims of every applicant, he has come to no conclusion, that I, as a near resident and magistrate but not an actual inhabitant,

was invited by your esteemed vicar to review the situation and put the case before you (*applause*). Why the letter was not automatically handed to the vicar I shall never understand (*laughter*): but perhaps the less said about that the better (*renewed laughter*). Thomas Burden's difficulty, I may say, has not been to decide who was not qualified to receive the letter: on that point he has been almost embarrassingly sure of himself; but to decide to whom it should go. I will not detain you by giving a list of the unsuitable but will come at once to the business of the evening, which is to endeavour to make a definite choice ourselves.

A VOICE. Why don't he give it to my baby?

THE CHAIRMAN. Who is that? If you have anything to say you must come up here.

(*Loud cheers during which HARRY CLOVER is forced towards the platform.*)

And what do you wish to say?

CLOVER. Me and my missus want justice. Me and my missus hold that there's no one more innocent—that is more honest-like—than a new-born babe, and as ours was born after the letter got here, it's to her that it ought to be delivered. That's what I say. (*Sensation.*)

ANOTHER VOICE. In that case, what I say is that it's mine, and mine twice over.

THE CHAIRMAN. Order, order! We can't have these interruptions. If you want to say anything—or, rather, if you have anything to say—you must come up here. Who is it?

VOICES. Tom Peasmark, sir. His wife had twins last night.

THE CHAIRMAN. Twins?

VOICES. Yes, sir. Boys.

THE CHAIRMAN. Come up here, Mr. Peasmark.

(*MR. PEASMARK ascends the platform.*)

Now then, what is your case?

PEASMARK. My case is, that if Clover's girl baby, born a month ago, has any right to this letter, my two sons, born last night (*applause*) and doing very well (*renewed applause*) have a greater right. For why? Because being four weeks younger, they've had four weeks less of this wicked world and therefore they're four weeks more honest; and as there's a brace of them the honesty is double. (*Loud cheers.*)

HARRY CLOVER. That may be, but if there hadn't been all this shilly-shallying my little girl would have had the letter directly it came.

THE CHAIRMAN. This is for the postman to decide. Now, Burden, what do you say?

BURDEN. I say what I said before, when Clover first tackled me. I say that the sender of that letter didn't have no new-born babes—babes just beginning this hard life—in his mind: what he was thinking of was people who had lived in it and been tempted and had come through with flying colours.

A VOICE. In that case I demand the letter for my feyther. (*Sensation.*)

THE CHAIRMAN. Who is this?

VOICES. Henry Barfield.

THE CHAIRMAN. Mr. Barfield, come up and tell us about it.

HENRY BARFIELD (*speaking with deep emotion*). My feyther's eighty-one come Christmas and he shouldn't be insulted. For I call it an insult on the part of Thomas Burden not to have brought the letter to him at once.

BURDEN. Insult, indeed! I don't insult people. I try to do my duty, but if ever again I have a letter to deliver, addressed like this one, I shall resign.

BARFIELD. Why didn't you hand it to my feyther?

BURDEN. Because he isn't honest.

BARFIELD (*taking off his coat*). My feyther not honest? (*Rolls up his sleeves.*)

BURDEN (*retreating*). I claim the protection of the chair.

THE CHAIRMAN. Order! Order! This is most irregular. Again let me point out that Thomas Burden was the only man who could deliver this letter, and if he didn't hand it to the old gentleman in question he had his reasons. Do you care to tell them, Burden?

BURDEN. It's like this, sir. Once when he was umpiring he gave me out caught at the wicket when my bat wasn't within a yard of the ball.

THE CHAIRMAN. Not a very serious charge. Umpires often make mistakes.

BURDEN. This wasn't a mistake; this was favouritism.

BARFIELD (*doubling his fists*). You're a liar!

THE CHAIRMAN. Order! Order! I can't have these exhibitions of feeling. Please return to your seat, Mr. Barfield. After

our proceedings are over you will have the opportunity of meeting Mr. Burden and—drinking a glass of beer with him. And now if there are any more claimants for the letter we will hear them. But let us be orderly. I suggest that it will facilitate matters if I ask everyone in this room, male or female, who is confident that he or she is the most honest person in Lesser Widdling, to hold up the right hand. (*Every hand seems to go up, including the VICAR'S.*) This is still more confusing. So far as I can see, everyone is voting for himself or herself. But possibly there may be an exception, and just as a matter of interest I should like to know. So will you all lower your hands and then if there is anyone present, male or female, who does *not* think himself or herself entitled to receive this letter, will that person please vote? (*Amid loud laughter one hand goes up.*) Ah! Only one vote and that Thomas Burden's. This is very enlightening. I admire you, sir. The Vicar had told me that you said to him that you did not think you had any right to the letter, but to advertise your disqualifications in public is remarkable. Indeed, it is more than remarkable, it is very honest, it is most honest. (*Sensation.*) Did I say 'most honest'? Good Heavens. Those words are extremely significant, because they are the exact words of the superscription on the envelope: 'To The Most Honest Person in Lesser Widdling.' (*Renewed sensation.*) Thomas Burden, it looks as though the letter was meant for you. Will you accept it?

BURDEN. Oh no, sir. I was voting the other way.

THE CHAIRMAN. Yes, but in the process of voting you manifested the purity of your character.

BURDEN. But I don't look on myself as honest at all. I told the Vicar so the other day. I told him—

THE CHAIRMAN. Never mind what you told him. The time has gone by for that. It looks now, as though, no matter how dishonest you may be—and I personally should guess you could be trusted with anything—you are the most honest person in Lesser Widdling. At any rate in this hall, where the gathering is representative. No one else had enough disinterestedness to repudiate what may be a fortune. Ladies and gentlemen, may I take it also as your opinion that, at any rate for the moment and for the purposes of this meeting, Thomas Burden is the most honest person in Lesser Widdling? Aye or No?

(*Almost universal cries of 'Aye' and 'Good old Burden!'*)

The ayes have it. Thomas Burden, give yourself the letter. (*Loud cheers.*)

(*THOMAS reluctantly draws the letter from his pocket, turns it over and puts it back, and after a handshake from the CHAIRMAN and the VICAR prepares to return to his seat amid cries of 'Open it! Open it!'*)

(*After a few moments.*) You are not going to open it here, Mr. Burden?

BURDEN. No, sir, if you don't mind. I'd rather take it home.

THE VICAR. But, my dear Thomas, surely you can't disappoint your friends like this? We are all on tenterhooks to know what your good fortune is. It would be very unkind not to let us into the great secret. Come, Thomas. (*Cries of 'Yes!' 'Yes!' and 'Open it!' on all sides.*)

BURDEN. Very well, but you do it for me, sir. I'm too nervous

(*He hands the letter to SIR HERCULES, who in a dead silence takes out his pocket knife and slits the envelope. He peeps in, removes a slip of paper, unfolds it, reads it to himself and then holds up his hand for attention.*)

THE CHAIRMAN. Ladies and Gentlemen, there is a message here which, although addressed to the recipient of the letter, should be heard by all:

'Dear and Singular Friend,—

'Probably you have found hitherto that virtue is its own reward. I myself have gone farther than that, for not only have I found that virtue is its own reward, but I believe that it ought to be its own reward. Nevertheless, since such a belief might be too discouraging, I am asking you to accept (*here the speaker drew from the envelope a second piece of paper*) the enclosed money order for one hundred pounds' (*frantic cheers, during which the CHAIRMAN hands the slip to THOMAS*) 'and I suggest,' the writer continues 'that ten per cent of it be given to the postman in return for his trouble.'

There, Mr. Burden, what do you think about that? Since you are the postman, you are doing pretty well.

THE VICAR. The Poor Box would be very grateful. (*Cries of 'Thomas Burden! Good old Burden!'*)

THE CHAIRMAN. Now, Mr. Burden, tell them what you are going to do.

BURDEN (*rising amid cheers*). Well, sir, and neighbours all, this is a great surprise and I don't know yet whether I'm standing on my head or my feet.

A VOICE. Your flat feet.

BURDEN. Well, if they are flat, it's carrying your letters and parcels all these years that's done it. (*Laughter.*) But I've decided what to do with that ten per cent. I'll give it to Mrs. Peek at the post office. Because I'm not at all sure she isn't honester than what you think I be. (*Sensation and cries of 'Mrs. Peek?' 'Pinch Plum?'*) Yes. I stick to it. She shall have the ten pounds. And for why? Because she had the registered letter in her hands for a whole night before anyone else saw it and—well—the money order was never taken out. (*Loud laughter in which, after a moment or two, Mrs. Peek joins.*)

THE CHAIRMAN (*after again shaking hands with BURDEN*). Well, now that we have found the most honest person in Lesser Widdling, and the next most honest, let us go to bed.

THE VICAR. But first may I ask you to join in singing The Old Hundredth, which Thomas Burden will perhaps lead. Now, Thomas! Now, Mrs. Peek!

AMERICAN VIGNETTES.

New York

A FAIRY fortress, rising tier on tier
From sea to sky, but—are there fairies here?

Chicago

A tiger young, swift, beautiful to see
With strength untamed this city is to me.

The Middle West

League after league the long day's journey through,
On wind-whipped plains the shredded corn-husks blew.

Seattle

Of old had Faith, but now the engineer
Has force to make the mountains disappear.

Los Angeles

Palms, oil-wells, roses, orange-groves, and cars,
Unending streets, innumerable 'stars.'

St. Louis

As Mississippi bears Missouri forth
In turbid might, so South is borne by North.

Boston

Where wandering cow-path makes a storied street,
Old English blood and Irish rancour meet.

GORELL.

THE SOURCES OF THE JORDAN.

BY FREYA STARK.

In long gentle lines the slopes of Hermon descend to Galilee, and hold in their arms the little lake of Hule. Few people know more of it than that it is visible from the Damascus-Jerusalem road, and lies like a mist enclosed in marshes on their right hand before they cross the Jordan by the bridge of the Daughters of Jacob. And few people wander up its shallow pastoral basin to where Jordan itself springs from the cliff beneath the shrines of Pan.

The landscape sinks here quietly from the ridges of the south: Moab in the distance across Tiberias water, and opposite, before Nazareth, the Horns of Hattin whose crest saw the last waterless and hopeless vigil, when the Crusading army waited surrounded through the night, listening to the Moslem drums, and knowing Jerusalem lost: from the Horns of Hattin to the higher highlands of Safed, where modern ringleted Jews rebuild their houses after massacre and walk the streets with patriarchal, cold looks, as the chosen among Ammonites and Amorites: from these high bare places, trampled by many hatreds, we dive in hairpin bends to the gentle lake of Hule.

I say we, but it was I, in a car full of Jews, which had left Safed early in the afternoon. We had stopped at so many Israelitish agricultural colonies on the way, and had had so much to say in each, that it was near sunset before we were well north of the bridge of Jacob's Daughters, and still visiting Jews in their homesteads on the western side of the lake: and whatever the Jews may be in their national home—especially when one knows that they are going to keep one from one's supper and one has already seen six different sets of them in one day—one cannot look without wonder and compassion and respect on those small colonies, so solitary with their straight lines of vines and fruit-trees in the bare and careless land, so forlorn in the untidy slipshodness of their communal house, that harbours so great a diversity of men in the power of one dream.

My car contained a stocky chauffeur, in shorts and a shirt open at the neck, a young man who had ceased to be handsome in his teens and was now becoming fleshy. I sat beside him : behind us was another Jew belonging to the next colony, a strong young man of a bonier and stronger type. An Agricultural Inspector sat next to him, travelling on his rounds ; and wedged between the two was a person in ragged draperies, a man who came to work on the new road to Metulleh, and who was, to look at, something between a navvy and an apostle.

In each colony we had stopped to leave letters and newspapers and every sort of commission with which our bloated Adonis, who was evidently a universal carrier and very popular, had been charged. The settlers, strolling about the stables or the yards, had gathered round languidly in the hot afternoon, talking Hebrew or Yiddish, and disregarding me with that Old Testament intolerance for the alien which has remained so strong a feature of the race, for good and evil. For several hours I had been fascinated, at one place after the other, by their remarkable diversity of type—the gross chin and nostril of America, the long-faced sallowness of Poland, the frowsy blond German, or black-browed Palestinian Jew : they lived together, with here and there in their rather depressing midst some thinker's head, that dreamed its dream undeterred by the sensual generation around it, whose natural language to-day would still be that of the prophets of Zion. One or two such I saw, and through their eyes could watch the bony land blossoming in the loveliness of the spirit ; and so walked with sympathy but rather weary behind the Agricultural Inspector, as he showed me rows of stripling pear-trees, and well-trimmed pergolas of vines.

Now it was really getting late, and we were tired and could only just make Metulleh before dusk ; and we sat silent, speeding along softly in the peace of that little-frequented road. On our right lay the marsh, hiding the bosom of Hule. From the shallow rise of the ground where the hills began, streams of water welled into it, flowing through meadows of grass and tufts of rushes and shining flat like mirrors in the late light. A clump of ilex brooded black over the road ; a police post stood square on our left ; on our right, owners of marsh buffaloes, a group of nomads from Algeria in plaited rush huts ; and before us, far away on a height, the next colony, and Metulleh over the dip beyond. These signs of animation were but specks here and there in the

empty width of the land, which slid towards us in fan-shaped slopes from where the folds of Hermon shone in the west. Like a beautiful woman reclining, with long limbs clothed in the clinging light, the lines of the hills lay at ease: and a flock of sheep that moved across the stubble, stopping to nibble here and there among short and barren spikes—a flock of sheep going slowly with four or five shepherds behind it, seemed to put as it were a seal upon the golden evening.

'This,' thought I, 'is Peace'; and watched the Beduin shepherds in their striped cloaks walking easily with their great air of freedom. It does one good to see men who walk like the Beduin in a world where most people have to count their steps.

My quiet thoughts, however, were suddenly diverted to the Jews. Our car had stopped. The handsome young man at the back had got out, had dashed across the stubble to the flock, and with a grab was seizing a ram by its Oriental tail. He carried it back in his arms, holding it pressed against his body as a baby holds the cat, with the same distressing effect on the feelings and expression of his victim. The door of the car was still open: the young man and the ram introduced themselves like a catapult: the chauffeur made terrifying noises to try and start the engine; and the shepherds came running up, as bewildered as I was, but much more clamorous.

'What is it all about?' I asked the Agricultural Inspector. He seemed the only person who had kept his head amid the din of argument that now rose on both sides.

'The sheep had no right to cross the land,' said he. 'It belongs to the Jewish colony. The young man is a member of the colony. He is going to take their ram as a punishment.'

A tall Beduin, with singularly regular and beautiful features, now interrupted. 'We were only passing,' said he. 'Wallah, there is nothing to hurt on the land if we would. What harm can it do if a flock of sheep go over it? Wallah, give us back our ram.'

'Give us back our ram,' said another threateningly. He was looking at us with light green eyes half closed, and held a useful stick with a metal knob on it in his hand.

The young man behind us was ready to fight: held back by the Inspector and, more effectually, by the object of the dispute, which sprawled on top of him, he made short and hectic attempts to get out, hurling invective meanwhile. The chauffeur had got

his engine started, and thought he could drive through the enemy like a battering ram; but the Beduin were not going to have this, and they pushed the car till it swayed like a coracle between the two ditches of the road.

They were roused now. A light not so much of battle as of cold murder shone in their eyes, a strange and awful sight for the ordinary tourist. 'Here,' I thought, 'I am going to be knocked on the head in mistake for a Jewess.' They were all coming at us with their big sticks, but luckily could not get in under the lattice-work of the low hood of the car. It was while things were in this state that someone suggested a return to the police-station.

Both sides favoured the proposal—the Arabs confident in the justice of their cause, and the two less bellicose Jews glad, I rather think, to get out of the mess. The chauffeur began to try to turn round.

'Three of us in the car,' cried the shepherds, still crowding up. 'There are three of you. We want to be equal.'

'One Beduin only,' said the Jews in chorus, anxious at all costs to have the better in numbers.

But one Beduin was already inside, more or less on top of the ram, and another was clinging to the footboard with a limpet strength beyond any son of Israel to dislodge; and while the matter was still in dispute I took a belated initiative, beckoned to the tallest of the tribesmen, who was standing near, and opened the door on my side. He looked at me with a surprised smile and jumped in: the chauffeur, now thoroughly rattled, finally got his car round; and leaving the green-eyed man and two companions behind with the flock, we sped back towards the police-station.

The police-station had an arched wooden gate in its blind outer wall, opening on to a small paved court, where a solitary native policeman and an Arab gate-keeper watched with faint interest while we disgorged first the three Beduin and the Agricultural Inspector, and then the flustered ram and the remaining Jews.

These now began to tell their story in the manner of a Greek chorus. Without thought of harm, they said, they had been travelling in the evening quiet: they had seen the Beduin flock walking across their land: they had called the shepherds and told them, in a gentle manner, how there was sheep disease in Syria which brought infection to the land: and had gone on to

explain that, though it did not matter for once, the Beduin must not trespass again: that sheep, possibly infected, could not be allowed to trespass: whereupon the Beduin shepherds, without offering an answer, had rushed at them with sticks, and only with difficulty were prevented from killing them.

Here the three shepherds, who had been choking and spluttering at every new embellishment, broke in all together with incoherent fury, enough in itself to damn their cause outright. The Jews listened unperturbed, calm in the confidence of men of words safe in their own element. The policeman, looking down his long nose under the black astrakhan head-dress, was perplexed: he suspected, but the stuttering Beduin were making a terrible mess of it and giving no useful evidence at all.

It was at this moment that I felt impelled to interfere. I remarked, at the first pause, that I was neither Arab nor Jew and had seen the whole episode from beginning to end.

'Wallah,' said the door-keeper, delighted. 'Listen to the Sitt: she has seen it all.'

The Beduin turned to me with pathetic relief, as to some miracle in that justice which habitually tramples on the inarticulate. The policeman looked relieved: the Arab door-keeper was obviously rejoicing.

'Was there indeed a fight?' asked the policeman.

'Not more than an argument,' said I; 'perhaps rather emphatic. The shepherds were annoyed to see their ram being carried away.'

'Ah yes, the ram,' said the policeman, as if noticing that noble animal for the first time. It was standing with its chin in the air in the middle of the yard looking like Louis Quatorze in a periwig. 'How did the ram get into the car?'

This pertinent question settled the matter. The Jews began to pack themselves back on to their seats without listening further to my remarks or to the policeman. They glanced at me as if I were a scorpion.

'We never meant to keep the ram,' they said. 'We only wanted to show the Beduin that they must not cross our land.'

The policeman said nothing. We turned the car round.

'Shall we give them all a lift back to their flock?' I asked.

But the Beduin had had enough of us and our means of conveyance. They stood by the policeman in a row, their cloaks and head-dresses still slightly disarranged by the fray: as we

turned out of the gate, three smiles lit their sun-blackened faces: a little in front of them, bland between its curling horns, stood the ram as if posing for a photograph. The smiles were addressed to me and not to the Jews, and were the last I had before reaching in the dusk—for this affair had taken some time—the village of Metulleh. There, still in silence, the Jews deposited me in the highway and got a bit of their own back by making me pay double for my seat.

In the last flicker of daylight, I was deposited in the middle of the road at Metulleh, with nothing but my knapsack, in most complete ignorance of the locality. The road went up a small hill. New but dingy houses stood on either side of it, with potential unrealised gardens around them. No one was walking about, not even a chicken or a dog. There is a friendless feeling about the world on such occasions.

The Agricultural Inspector, however, came in a secretive manner as soon as his companions were out of the way, and led me a few dozen yards to a stone house with an uneven sloping court behind it, which he pointed out as the Metulleh hotel. A stout fierce Jewess from Austria took my knapsack and led me up a ladder, through a room with three beds and a table, to another room with three beds and a table, furnished with jug and basin, an oil lamp and a tumbler. Her husband, also taciturn and grim, was chopping wood in the court below. Even their native German, which is a language almost as useful as Arabic in Palestine now, failed to bring the softening of an eyelid to their countenances.

Thoroughly depressed, I thought about pogroms in an appreciative manner for the first time in my life. I washed and descended to where my supper was laid with that of six other lodgers at the kitchen table. I had hardly sat down when they came in, six tall young men like the Brothers in the fairy tale, very clean and muscular, with khaki shorts and shirts open at the neck—for we were near the middle of June and the night was warmer and pleasanter than anything else in the village so far.

'Surprisingly good-looking, some of these Jews,' I thought, as we examined each other in the constrained atmosphere cast by a new arrival.

One of the young men then spoke.

'Will you pass the salt, Jack?' said he, in a broad north-country voice.

A sweet and unexpected sound.

I had come upon the last outpost of the British-Palestine Police, placed here against smugglers upon the Syrian frontier. After a day among the national homes, their accents sounded very kind.

Metulleh is not a place crowded with tourists, and the five police and their corporal made me very welcome. We were soon discussing border gossip in the manner of friends. Their amusement in life seemed to consist chiefly of nightly searches for smugglers and of horse racing with other units. They told me about both these sports with gusto, and described the wiles of the Arab, who creeps among the folded hills by day and keeps his bales ready in some hollow close to the border road, to rush the narrow strip of danger in the darkness.

The smuggling, they told me, is all done from Syria into Palestine. It is an observed phenomenon that British control sends up the price of living the world over, thereby causing a great influx of illegal trade from the cheaper regions all around. But life on most frontiers is of a dreary dullness, and smuggling rather a godsend: and what it will be like when free trade becomes universal hardly bears thinking of from the point of view of the Frontier Police.

In Palestine there is always the racial question to fall back upon when other amusements fail: but the trouble with it, the policemen explained in chorus, is the want of proper regulations for a fair game. The Arabs are a sporting lot, they said: they will massacre whenever they get the chance to do so, in a single-minded manner: but the Jews will only retaliate when they are sure of a good majority, and otherwise prefer to appeal to law. 'We can't even get up a decent football team among them,' said the young men, as if the question were one and the same—which it may be. 'We are always having to round up these Arabs who do their own dirty work like gentlemen. And yet, funnily enough, it is they who like us. The Jews would see us swept away to-morrow, if they didn't know that that would be the end of them to a man.'

I am not going into these problems, and merely repeat the gossip of an outpost meal; though what I could see of the attitude of the two races towards us in these little-frequented villages, bore out the policemen's remarks. The Arab will treat any stranger with a pleasant equality that assumes that he has a right to be there: but in the Jewish villages there was an unmistakable sug-

gestion that a Britisher is an outsider for whom a closing door is the most suitable form of conversation.

At the moment, the police of the district were busy on the track of a young Arab who had eleven dead Israelites to his credit at the age of twenty-three. He had bagged the last two quite indiscriminately a few days before, when on his way home after shopping in full sunlight at Haifa, with a price on his head. The young man was safe while he kept in the villages, none of which would give him up: but he was now tracked and hemmed into a very narrow circle, 'and I'm afraid we're going to get him quite soon,' said the policemen, with visible regret.

'We'll give you a mount to-morrow, to the Crusaders' castle,' they promised as I left them. I climbed my ladder in moonlight, and passed among the three outer beds to my room.

'Lock your door,' said a little Arab maid in pink frilled trousers who saw me up. 'If travellers come in the night, we'll bring them in to sleep with you if they are women: and if it's a man, he'll be put just outside here.' With which vista of possibilities I lay down.

To ride is the only sensible way to travel, but in the hilly parts of the Near East a mule is the most satisfactory animal: a horse requires all the attention for his footsteps, and leaves none over for the landscape.

Apart from this, the ride from Metulleh to the Château Belfort is one of the most pleasant imaginable, over bold and open hills, with a good canter to begin with up to the French post at the border.

The morning was fine, the country still faintly green. Balls of blue thistles blossomed over it. The mass of Hermon, like a sleeping rhinoceros with wrinkled skin, lay under a pale summer sky.

The policemen provided me with the smallest pair of breeches in the garrison, in which I felt that I also must look somewhat like a rhinoceros, so loosely did they hang about me. With an ex-lancer as escort, and my knapsack slung behind, we burst on the nonplussed gaze of the French *sous-officier*, whose ideas of travelling ladies and decorum were obviously quite different.

We did finally leave the French post behind us with *visas* all in order, and rode into Syria down stony terraces of corn, towards the Litani river in a narrow valley on our left. Beyond,

on a cliff a thousand feet high and more, was the Castle on the Hill, Belfort with its battlements, an inaccessible and almost unbelievable sight. On our right, on a rounded ridge, were villages in trees. We rode down the valley between the two, with rolling hills and all the world before us, travelling as it might have been in a page of Froissart, with an open mind.

However much is written about them, one will never say the last word on these Crusader castles, for the very spirit of romance is built into their stones. What other story so gallant, what other achievement so immense and so transitory is there in the history of the world? Between the taking of Jerusalem and the battle of Hattin was less than one hundred years, and these great feudal structures, built with the arts and loving handiwork of Normandy and Provence, still stand about the land, stronger than the remnants of all other ages, heavy on the tops of the hills like the mailed gauntleted fists of their old fighting lords.

The best of the Crusaders settled here in the highlands, above the commerce and grasping policies, the Italian intrigues and jealousies of the towns along the coast. Here were the country squires and feudal lords, with a simpler faith, living their life as they lived it in their northern country towns: with ever an eye round the flank of Hermon for their enemy in the south.

At the top of the cliff-face that hangs above the river of Belfort far below, one can still enter vaulted rooms built off a corridor which runs along the mountain crest. The keep is of dressed stone above: beside it is a church through whose broken arches and carved stumps of pillars one looks, as an eagle might, towards Baniyas and the desert on one side, or down gentle northern slopes towards the sea. A fosse runs round it on the north, from which slopes a glacis of squared stone, where bushes and creepers push their roots into the crevices.

From this side we climbed with no little trouble in the heat of the day, curving round the steep shoulder of the mountain on a path too slippery for riding, and with the exertion of keeping out of the way of our horses' hoofs added to our natural difficulties. And the coming down was almost as hard, for the only easy way to Belfort is from the coast. There was no drink for the horses either, till we descended again to the Litani and paused on a bank of grass and oleanders, where black and white flocks were drinking too.

From the foot of Belfort we climbed southward to Judeide

on the ridge, the beginning of the Druse country, and a place whence cars go to Banias. There we sat in a coffee shop in the square (for there are no inns for Europeans in this region), and ate small apricots on ice, and discovered beer, and found a car travelling in the direction of the springs of Pan.

There, with many grateful feelings, I left the lancer, and travelled again in the light of evening across the northern plain of Hule to Banias on a foothill of Hermon where, knowing no one, I entered the house of the Sheikh to ask for hospitality.

Out of a great red cliff, still cut into shell-shaped niches at its base for Greek departed gods, the water of Jordan wells suddenly in many places and runs together and flows away through rushes, under green singing poplars and overhanging fig-trees, in a stream with waves in it, whose delightful noise is like the very voice of joy.

Here I strolled in the last light of the evening and wondered how such living loveliness can end in the death of the Dead Sea with iron hills around it. Even as that stripling shepherd, the birdlike voice of David, is heard and lost again in bitter chronicles of Kings.

Here as yet there is no hint of the river of Jehovah—but an Arcadian peace and intimate presence, a sense of friendly and secret influences of Earth. For this is Banias, the shrine of Pan: and though the niches are empty, and the temple ruins buried beneath the boulders at our feet, Mystery still dwells here, a sense of simple but enduring powers, as old and eternal as the rocks and water. For here no doubt people brought offerings, gathered wild figs and brought garlands of flowers, long before niches were carved or shrines were built, the atmosphere of the place being sacred in itself, with the Latin meaning, in the stillness of its immense lee of cliff under which the water and trees and summer air flutter and play unconscious of awe, like children in cathedral aisles.

Few places, even in Palestine, where history is crowded in so small a space, are closely packed as Banias. The cliffs of Pan give birth to the river of John and of Joshua; and the castle on the hill was built by Crusaders and held by Arabs and filled with cannon by the French in 1925; and the hill itself is but a stepping-stone to Hermon in whose recesses the old rites were still held and the golden calf worshipped not many years ago.

Here in the evening I wandered, and two civilised gentlemen from Damascus, who were visiting their country cousin, the Sheikh of Banias, wandered beside me, and marvelled no doubt in their hearts what strange European enigma, with nothing but a knapsack to explain her, had so descended upon them from the blue. The country cousin, untrammelled by any illusion of Western knowledge, had been more able to cope with the situation. Without asking even my name, he received me with great courtesy in a large matted room, and after some little conversation, left me to deal as best I could with a large wash basin and small can of water on the floor, and nine uncurtained windows all around me. He for his part evidently retreated to ask his cousins what is the usual European method of dealing with such circumstances—a puzzling question, not dealt with in the Beirut University curriculum. But they got out of it creditably, and came in relays to entertain me, and took me in the sunset to the waters of Pan. And then, by the city walls now disguised in houses, of which the Sheikh's house is one, they led through dusty quiet streets to where a warrior is buried under a whitewashed dome, so long ago that it is no longer remembered whether he were Crusader or Arab: he can be a Saint for either party now. Beyond the grave is the gate, a square strong ruin, where the walls of the town descending still show along the course of a small stream: and here a bridge without a parapet leads out to the modern motor road from the coast—so close are all these ages jumbled up together.

It was considered suitable for me to eat my supper in dignified but rather dull solitude off seven or eight little dishes on a round tray on the floor. The crumbs were then swept away, a mattress was brought with quilt and bolster, with some difficulty I induced two of the nine windows to open, and, after looking out at the soft stars and swaying trees and nightly murmur of the orchards with the flat roofs among them, I slept till early morning and stepped out into a brilliant dawn to find a shepherd lad in striped cotton gown with a skull-cap on his head and a staff in his hand and elastic-sided boots with tapes to pull them on by over his naked ankles, ready to lead me to the castle on the hill.

This is one of the pleasantest walks of Syria, through olive groves in the rising hollow of a slope, with green Banias below, and the castle, like a long Chinese dragon, seen at different angles as the path winds up. It lies in the sun with a mellowness of

age about it, too strong even in ruin to be looked upon without respect. But now that turrets and battlements have fallen in, and only the pastoral land still lives in its unchanging way, one thinks less of the wars and sieges, and more of quiet seasons that must have slipped by for the families of Banias, Christian or Arab : the country life of the château, with simple interests, hunting and fowling in the marshes, visits to Belfort on the northern ridge in sight, or to Bosra whose annual fair was always observed with a truce and was free to Banias later, when the Saracens had once more seized it and kept the Damascus road.

Silky black goats that speckle Syrian landscapes were browsing among the rocks. Blue thistle balls grew there, which lizards hunt for after a snake-bite, and die, said my guide, if they cannot find and eat them soon. A strange white mist lay around us, descending through the sunlight at intervals to swathe the castle and trees, as if we were entering into a world of dreams.

We followed a track made for the French guns during the Druse rebellion, and entered the fortress from the south, through tumbled squared stones sometimes three or more feet in length.

One can walk into little turret rooms built in the wall, or climb steps down to the great cistern half-filled with green and weedy water. No doubt, if picks were brought, many more rooms would emerge from under the heaps of stone. But I like my ruins untouched and unattended, and to watch in dead temples how the sunlight and weeds, lizards and scurrying beetles and grasses, throw their thin living veil over the past.

As we loitered, the shepherd of Banias, who sits muttering to his flocks and herds all day having no one else to talk to, came up to us, and showed where the good water is in a cool place among the stones. He was a pleasant old man, with clear grey eyes of the Lebanon. Over the ruins, trailing caper plants hung white and purple flowers. Meadowsweet grew there also. The crested larks sat round about. And again I marvelled at the immense labour, the almost incredible effort that has gone to the chiselling of these great honeycombs of stone.

We came down steeply beside the cliff of Banias, keeping a small savage gorge on our left hand : and glad in the heat of the morning, with one of my shoes worn away altogether by needle-pointed rocks, to see below us the waters of Jordan, to rest near the pagan niches, and plunge our arms up to the elbow in the stream.

In the late afternoon I left Banias. I sat first with my host's wife and his mother, a beautiful old woman with head draped in white as the Druses use, who never went beyond her two rooms and a roof covered with blossoming flower-pots, and found contentment there. 'When my eyes are tired,' she told me, 'I open my window to the sea wind, and look down on the moving trees.' They are never still at Banias; a light breeze rustles through them all the summer long. 'And when my heart is tired,' said the old lady, 'I sit by myself and think of God.' She kissed me when I went and said kind words, and left me the better for meeting her, for she had looked upon life in her gentle way and been touched by it to a wonderful serenity.

A passing car accepted me. It insisted on turning a wounded Beduin, who was going to Damascus with his chest padded with leaves to stop the bleeding, out on to the road for my benefit. I resisted until the man himself, marvelling at my views on the subject, strode away holding the green dressing to him. We, north-east of Hule, again came out on the Damascus-Tiberias road.

Here a last adventure still befell. A limousine came rolling by, expensively silent amid our plebeian grindings and hoots, and with the Emir Fahur of the Julān, a great man in his land, inside.

My dilapidated but inspired chauffeur, who had come to the end of his beat but was supposed to find me a conveyance farther on, leaped out and without hesitation waylaid the splendid vision. The great man, apparently not surprised, bowed his head. I and my knapsack were transferred in the twinkling of an eye. 'It was not I, it was Allah who killed him,' said the great man, continuing the conversation with his chauffeur, as we started off again on luxurious springs. He had a wall eye, and a small straight nose, and immaculate white *kefleh*: he gesticulated nervously over the irritating habits of the dead: I sat behind, listening with amusement to the Syrian politics, watching the gardens of Damascus grow before us, and blessing the democracy of the East in my heart.

Miss Stark's book, 'The Valleys of the Assassins,' which includes the articles on travel in Luristan which have appeared in CORNHILL, is to be published by John Murray early in May.

THIS WORLD INDEED.

ACROSS the frozen stillness of the night
 The stars are like the riding lanterns bright
 Of an armada, from each uttermost
 Outlying coast
 Of timeless space
 Assembled here to menace and outface
 With their blockade this little world, that seems
 Shrunk to a tiny isle, whose eager dreams
 Of life and love and liberty offend
 The cold abstractions of that ambient sea
 Of dead immensity
 Unplumb'd, that threatens still,
 And like a ruthless will
 Would compass this world's end.

So is the night a nightmare grown, and all
 The long dead stars are threats of what may fall,
 And I am as a swimmer carried wide
 On a chill tide;
 Until I hear
 Your voice again, and see, lamplit and near,
 Your lips, your eyes, your hair, and all the white,
 Slim grace of you—a delicate delight
 Of waking loveliness—and in the hold
 Of sudden rapture know this world indeed
 Is sweet and warm; nor heed
 What alien surges may
 Around it night and day,
 Unseen, break bleak and cold.

PATRICK FORD.

OLD ETON DAYS.

BY A. N. RADCLIFFE.

I WENT to Eton in 1869, but my memories extend much beyond that date in both directions, as my grandfather, whom I well remember, left the School in 1804 and I have had innumerable relations there since. I am told that the School is not what it was, that the old county families have been or are being killed out by taxation and that the boys are drawn from a different class, but while no doubt there has been some change in this direction I have no reason to suppose that the traditions of the old School are not much the same : they certainly were up to the end of the War. One of the chief changes between my time and 1900 was that we travelled always first class, but by 1900 all boys went third : I found, however, that a boy going to town on leave still drew ten shillings journey money as we did and pocketed the difference between the first- and third-class fare !

The great feature in my time was that you were almost entirely self-taught : with the notable exception of 'Billy' Johnson the masters were not out to impart knowledge but to find out your mistakes and if necessary to punish them.

I well recollect my arrival at 'm'tutor's' ; there was nobody but the butler to welcome me, I was shown my room and had to look after myself ; fortunately I knew one of the new boys, so we made our way together to Upper School the next morning to be examined. I took Remove, which then was the highest form a new boy could get into and was 'up' to Mr. Arthur James. He had a wretched little room under Upper School just at the foot of the stairs leading up to the chapel ; there were three or four rows of steps along the room on which the boys sat without any desks and the outlook was grim and grimy. There was no superannuation rule in those days and the division consisted of about fourteen new collegers or 'tugs,' four or five clever oppidans and about twenty boys who had at last managed to get out of the Fourth Form ; they were mostly in tails, all of them hated 'tugs' and were past masters in the art of doing no work whatsoever. Can a more ill-assorted class be imagined ? And the worst of it was that the same class

for Classics went together for Mathematics and French ; there was no selection and putting together of boys with any special aptitude, and ' trials,' the only examination at which places could be changed, were then held but once a year. So we were cooped up with some of the idlest boys in the school for a twelvemonth, and it affected us, of course, prejudicially in every way. But it was worse for the young oppidans, as in College there was a high tradition for hard work and a boy was looked down upon if he did not keep up to standard ; oppidans had no such tradition to help them.

The house masters must have made a lot of money out of their boys. We had breakfast and tea in our own rooms, generally messing two together, and our rations consisted at each meal of a quarter of a square loaf of bread, a pat of butter about the size of a crown-piece, and once a week a limited amount of either tea or coffee and lump sugar which was put in little tin canisters : this was not sufficient for growing boys and as breakfast was early and dinner at 2 p.m. there was a long wait and it was necessary to supply the deficiency by hampers from home and food bought out of our own pockets. At m'tutor's we were only allowed to cook eggs and it was practically impossible to get fresh eggs : we bought them at Atkins, the grocer's, who charged high prices for ' new laid ' eggs, but they came out of a suspicious-looking box : there was indeed an old woman who specialised in ' fresh ' eggs and charged accordingly, but from their strong flavour I am afraid they came out of a twin box to that at Atkins's, only as her customers were not so numerous her box lasted longer !

I was a ' wet bob,' and if your ambitions were to get into the ' boats,' it was essential to devote the whole of your spare time to hard rowing. The only boats which had outriggers were eights, fours, racing pairs and sculling racing-boats which were called outriggers : you began your career in a ' cedar,' a lightly made and somewhat cranky craft built of cedar : you had to go to ' absence ' in full dress with high hat, etc., and your object on three afternoons a week was to row up to Monkey Island : you subscribed with two other boys for a ' lock up ' cedar and directly your name was called you had to rush to Goodman's raft where, in a rackety room on the first floor, you changed into rowing things which you kept in a locker ; you then tore down with your two pals and rowed away for all you were worth, as, if you wanted to get to Monkey, you had to get into first lock (there were no rollers then by the side of the lock) with the eights and the outriggers. This meant a

rowing stroke all the way, and I can hear the 'catch' of the oars in the rowlocks as the eights gradually caught us up and the shrill voice of the cox calling out 'Look ahead,' which made us get hastily out of the way. There was a great crowd of boats in the lock, but accidents rarely happened and as soon as the lock gate opened the eights and outriggers went out first, but all the time you were gradually passing your boat along so as to get out as quickly as possible: you then rowed away at top speed and it required some skill in so cranky a craft as a 'cedar' to change places in the boat when one of the crew had earned a shift. When you got to Monkey you regaled yourself with a pint of shandygaff, returned to the boat without any loss of time, rowed back to the rafts at best pace, changed and, running back to College, got there just in time for six o'clock 'absence.' Once or twice in the half you managed to row up as far as a farm called 'Franklin's' where in the parlour you had some home-made cake and a glass of beer: it was to this farm that the eights went, and if some boy high in the boats saw you there he would generally congratulate you for having got so far, which made your bosom swell with pride. Queen's Eyot was then a desert island and the idea of rowing quietly to it, having tea and 'absence' there and coming down in the cool of the evening as is, I believe, done now would have been quite contrary to the traditions of rowing in my time.

I went to the Eton and Harrow matches long before 1869: there were no reserved seats, but all round the ground were three rows of carriages and drags, and close to the ropes were two rows of benches: nobody unconnected with the schools came and lunch was eaten in the carriages; it was, in fact, a jolly picnic on a large scale. As the carriages filled up with ladies in the afternoon a lot of the boys sat on the grass outside the ropes and the police had to come round at convenient opportunities to persuade us to get back close to the ropes because we encroached on the ground. The barracking was terrific and it required a boy of strong nerves to stand up against it, but the boys of the two schools hated each other heartily and free fights were not unknown.

One year in the early 'seventies, Dr. Hornby, for some reason best known to himself, gave orders that no boy was to take 'long leave' after the match, but we were all to return on the Saturday by a special train which would leave Paddington about 9 p.m. We had won the match after many defeats, we had dined well and were in the highest possible state of excitement: the train was

there and we got into it, but for some reason I never understood it did not start. After a long wait the boys began to get out on to the platform again : nothing happened and by degrees there was a certain amount of horseplay : the guard tried to stop it, but with no success and at last a high official in uniform was sent for. He came and said, ' Really, gentlemen, I must ask you to behave quietly,' when some rowdy boy called out ' Hoist him ! ' At once some stalwarts seized the unhappy official, lifted him off his legs and ran him up and down the platform, but of course no damage was done to him. At last the train did start, but it kept stopping and when it was nearly 11 p.m. we got to the bridge over the Thames at Windsor and here it declined to proceed farther and we were told to get out on to the line and find our way to the station as best we could. The whole school then disembarked and, forming in rows four or six abreast, small boys and big without distinction, went arm in arm through the station to College, cheering with all our might and waking up the inhabitants, as it must have been midnight by the time we got back : it was glorious. The Head did not repeat the experiment !

At one time there was great hostility between oppidans and collegers and in my day there was a certain amount of bad feeling, but it was fast dying out and for many years it has disappeared. It is difficult to believe that until about 1867 no colleger could represent the School on the field or on the river : the absurdity of this was shown when College had so many good athletes that they could have probably beaten the School in any event. They had Maude and Ottaway in the cricket field (the latter being one of the best all-round athletes of his day), Goldie, Mackinnon Wood and Dowding on the river, all of whom got their blues for rowing at the University, W. W. Radcliffe and Freeth in the football field, and R. V. Somers-Smith who was a celebrated runner and became president of the C.U.A.C.

There were still a few rough-and-tumble customers in College in 1869, but they were kept in order by the better class of boy. One boy had lost a lot of money by gambling and did not know how to meet his creditors, but he bethought him of a way to raise money. There was a doctor in Windsor whose son had got on the list for College, but there was no vacancy and unless one occurred that half he would not get the scholarship : the embarrassed ' tug ' went to the doctor, so the story runs, and said if he would let him have £100 he would get the sack and so let the son into College : the doctor

said he would consider the proposal. He did so and went to the Head, told him the story and consequently the 'tug' was expelled and the doctor's son got into College, and a first-rate fellow he was. There was also a boy in Sixth Form who had the appropriate name of 'Gutty': he made a bet he would eat an enormous number of eggs at a sitting: eggs at Eton, as I have said, were never fresh, but you can have a sufficiency of even new-laid eggs. Gutty made a gallant effort, but after he had managed two or three dozen he could stomach no more and lost his bet.

Others have written about the riot which took place one Election Saturday in which Mr. C. C. James, one of the masters, was nearly put into Barnes Pool, but m'tutor always had a 'sock' supper on that evening, no doubt to keep us out of mischief, and we were not in the fun. The next day the Head set all Fifth Form an *Æneid* to write out: m'tutor tried to get his house off, but without success. The industrious boys set to work at once to get the lines done in good time; there were nearly 1,000 lines to be done, but the idlers put it off till the last moment, and to our delight the day before the lines had to be shown up the Head sent a message to say he wanted to see all Fifth Form in Upper School. The idlers, of whom I was one, jeered at those who had finished the punishment and went with cheerful hearts to obey the Head's summons. The Head was always treated with the greatest respect, but I shall never forget the howl of disapproval which greeted his first words, 'I have not called you here to let you off the general punishment.' Mr. James behaved very well over the riot as the ringleader was a boy in his house; he would certainly have been expelled if it had not been for Mr. James, who made a special appeal for him.

Mr. James had the nickname of 'Stiggins' when a boy at Eton; he was an unpopular master, but he made you work; he had no sympathetic touch with boys and said things which galled them. He had one fad which I soon discovered when I was in his division; on Sundays we were set questions on divinity called 'Sunday Qs'; if you showed up a good paper well written he gave you what he called 'an exemption,' which let you off so many lines if you were set a punishment. I found out that he set his questions out of the notes to Wordsworth's Greek Testament and as I could always write a good hand I got quite a lot of exemptions and as I was punctual in school and knew my lessons I could not make use of these useful papers as I got no punishments. I bethought how best I could employ them and came to the conclusion that if after 'long

leave' I was not in too much of a hurry to catch my train it would be convenient. Accordingly I arrived at eleven o'clock school ten minutes late which was a rather serious offence, and Stiggins asked me to see him after school; in due course I went up to his desk, and he looked stern and read me a lecture, but said as I was a good boy he would not send me to the Head which would have involved being 'swished' and he set me a large number of lines. I quietly put my hand in my pocket, took out a sheaf of exemptions, handed in the number to cover the lines set, said 'Thank you, sir,' and walked out; he made no comment, but he had a peculiar look which seemed to say, 'Don't miss your train again'!

After Mr. James had retired to a country living, I was one day having breakfast with my wife when on opening my letters I found one from him which began somewhat as follows: 'I am sitting in my garden and thinking of old Eton days and my mind naturally turns to the best boys who used to be in my division and your name came vividly before me as did the excellent Latin verses you showed up to me!' I said to my wife, 'Hullo, here's a letter from my old Eton master, Stiggins James, who says he is gloating over my Latin verses when I was "up" to him: I always told you I was a jolly clever boy; you would not believe me, but here is chapter and verse.' 'Oh,' said my wife, 'you grew out of that long ago and I should think Mr. James was in his dotage.' I read on in silence, and the sting of the letter was in its tail, because it ended by Mr. James saying he had a beautiful old church which he was going to restore and if I would send a donation he would be very grateful. The trap was well baited and he deserved the cheque I sent, but I did not read the end of that letter to my wife!

'Judy' Durnford was Lower Master in my time and was quite first-rate, liked by both masters and boys: his family and mine knew each other at home and he had been tutor to an uncle of mine. My younger brother when a lower boy had been sent to Judy to be 'swished': Judy recognised him at once, but told him to 'go down' on the block, but all the time he was applying the birch he was talking to my brother somewhat in this fashion: 'How is your uncle?' (swish). 'Tell him to come and see me' (swish); 'Give him my love' (swish), and so on. My brother said he was not looking his best, and found it difficult to reply with a pleasing air over his left shoulder! Another time my brother's house was in the final for the lower boy house cup; the game was prolonged, and both XI's came breathless into school yard late for

'absence.' Judy knew perfectly well why they were late, but he said, 'Why are you boys so disgracefully late for "absence"?' My brother answered, 'Please, sir, we have been playing in the final of the lower boy cup.' 'Which side won?' said Judy. 'We did,' replied my brother. 'Well,' said Judy, 'your side may go, but the other side must write out twenty lines.' The boys scuttled away rejoicing, as the number of lines was nominal. Judy understood the minds of boys.

Jimmy Joynes succeeded Judy Durnford as Lower Master; Jimmy was universally liked and respected, which shows that it is not necessary to have good looks to get on with boys: he was short, very much so, with a large head, and really ugly, but he had a kindly eye and a pleasant way with him. There was a capital caricature of him in *Vanity Fair*. Because he was abnormally short the lower boys said when he was appointed that it would not hurt at all to be swished by him, but he let it be known that in his youth he was celebrated for his 'cut down' at fives and it was soon found that his arm had not lost its cunning.

In my time the Head always was at 'absence' and called over the names of all Sixth and Fifth forms: I think this was wise, as it gave dignity to it, and it was one of the few occasions when the ordinary boy was in touch with the Head. The present plan seems slack, and does not set a good example to the whole School.

We were not kept in glass cases and were allowed to go to the summer meeting of the Windsor racecourse and came to no harm, and enjoyed all the fun of the side shows, but of course we could not stay long as we had to get back for 'absence.' We also went to some steeplechases held near Windsor. We were not allowed to go to Ascot, but a few boys went. There was a master whose chief delight was to catch boys doing something they should not; he went by the name of 'Hoppy' owing to his gait. One Ascot he spotted two boys and gave chase, they bolted for a cab, he after them: they got there first and told the cabby to drive away furiously, but before they could get off up came Hoppy; the boy nearest him had the presence of mind to open his umbrella suddenly in Hoppy's face, which so startled him that he fell and broke his arm, and the joke was that he did not get the names of the boys who sailed home triumphant. The next time Hoppy came to Chapel, with his arm in a sling, the whole School tittered, and even the masters could scarce forbear to laugh: Hoppy was a beast!

In Montem days the collegers slept on very heavy solid oak beds;

I have a model of one. Whoever was captain of the School at midnight on a certain night was what was called 'Montem sure,' that is to say, he was sure of getting the 'sat' which was collected during proceedings and was sufficient to enable him to complete his education at Cambridge. My uncle told me that just before midnight the collegers stood these massive beds on their heads and as the clock struck twelve the beds were let down with such a roar that it could be heard all over the school: it was followed by tumultuous cheering which was taken up by the oppidans. The colleger who waved the flag before Queen Victoria at the last Montem (which was part of the ceremony) was Mr. Augustus F. Westmacott, who afterwards kept a successful preparatory school.

In an enclosure in Windsor Park there used to be kept some wild boars and shortly after I had left, an Eton boy, evidently a prospective big-game hunter, determined to try and slay one of these boars; having procured a suitable knife and strong stick, he sallied forth one day and having adjusted his weapon to his liking he got into the boars' enclosure and, in fact, slew a boar. This was brought to the knowledge of the School authorities who were panic-stricken, thinking that Queen Victoria would be very angry and perhaps withdraw some of the privileges she always gave to Eton boys. The facts were placed before her and she at once said that the boy was on no account to be punished, as he was a very brave little fellow: so indeed he was.

Most boys who have been to public schools look back on their schooldays with pleasure, but none more so than those who for a time dwelt 'neath Henry's holy shade.'

'NATURAL ENEMY' CURES.

BY E. D. CUMING.

I.

By 'Natural Enemies' I mean Animal Enemies, such as the musk rat, imported to the end that large fortunes might be made from his skin under the trade name 'musquash'; such furs must have a trade name—imagine a furrier who valued his solvency offering a garment avowedly made from the skins of any kind of rat! With the wealth of experience, painful enough, gained in our colonies seeking the aid of 'Natural Enemies' to battle with indigenous foes we ought to have known better than admit the musk rat at all. True, precautions to prevent his escape from confinement were enjoined on those who possessed him; the beast was to be kept rigorously imprisoned, his owner was to keep a record of births, sales and deaths, and the place of his abiding was to be open to official scrutiny at all reasonable times. One vital detail was overlooked; to wit, that any burrowing animal is particularly difficult to keep under control. The musk rat soon demonstrated his talents as an excavator, and now, as everyone knows, we are trying to exterminate him.

A few years ago it would have been correct to say that with the single exception of the red deer in New Zealand, imported for sport and denied opportunity to increase beyond desirable numbers, no alien species has ever been imported into any country without that country repenting the step, and paying heavily for the indiscretion. Now it is possible to make another exception in favour of the mongoose in Jamaica whose case will be considered later. We have a case under our own eyes in the person of the grey squirrel who, dissatisfied with the accommodation furnished by the Zoological Society, has spread over the country, expelling in the great majority of cases our native red squirrel. That grey squirrel has cost us nothing in cash yet, but it is too soon to assert that that will continue.

The first mistake of the kind is a very old one; in the year 1513 the Portuguese to whom St. Helena then belonged, imported goats for the sake of milk, in itself a reasonable proceeding enough.

In those days the island was forest-clad as to its mountain flanks, and there was abundance of undergrowth. Goats being browsers, they were allowed to run loose on the wooded slopes, and they did well; they thrive so well that seventy-five years after their introduction they were to be counted in thousands. And then results began to appear; they ate down the undergrowth on the hillsides so thoroughly that when the rains came the soil, released from the detaining roots of the bushes, slid down the rocky steepes and left them bare; and in consequence the large timber began to die off for lack of root-hold. In 1709, the island then having passed into possession of the old East India Company, the governor reported that the forests were rapidly disappearing, and urged that steps be taken to kill down the goats before complete denudation of the hills ensued from the too healthy appetites of those goats. Why the governor did not take upon himself the responsibility of ordering the necessary step history sayeth not; the fact remains that nothing was done. A century later total destruction of the forests was reported, and it became necessary to import fuel. The cost of fuel for government use alone thereafter is said to have amounted to over £2,700 a year; no small item in the St. Helena budget.

The common brown rat has been so long established in this country that we forget his foreign extraction. His original habitat, says Blandford in his *Mammals of India*, is Chinese Mongolia; but why the pest set out upon his travels it is impossible to guess. Bold and enterprising, he is said to have crossed the Volga by swimming and made good his footing in eastern Russia in 1727; and after that there was no holding him; he spread all over Europe. Our own supply of brown rat did not come from this invasion; it seems to have been an accidental importation, the first stock arriving as stowaways in a vessel or vessels from western India in 1732. Before the arrival of the brown rat the black species was common in Britain, but the former, being the stronger, in course of time practically exterminated the latter; though, by the way, the black rat has recently been increasing.

Next, in chronological order, comes the rabbit in Australia. It was in 1864 or thereabout that one Mr. Robinson (to whose memory nobody has proposed a monument) obtained from England and turned down on his sheep-run in the Warrambool district of Victoria thirteen rabbits. Mr. Robinson did this, seeking the sport he had enjoyed at Home; and, about the same time, rabbits were imported into New Zealand and Tasmania. They did only too well wherever

they had been released. By June, 1870, over 100,000 had been killed and after fifteen years rabbits had spread so widely and become so numerous that they constituted a nuisance. The governments of the various provinces took the matter in hand. South Australia led the way, passing laws for the destruction of rabbits; New South Wales, Queensland, New Zealand and Tasmania followed suit, declaring merciless war on the plague. Millions of money were spent on endeavours to check it; thousands of miles of wire netting were erected, a special Department was established to superintend operations; in a word everything ingenuity could devise was done to stay the spread of the rabbit. All in vain; in spite of poison, wholesale trapping in pits and every means of slaughter the rabbit continued to reproduce his kind and spread. In 1887 over 19 millions of rabbits were killed in New South Wales alone. New Zealand tried importing natural enemies—cats, stoats, weasels and polecats—but the remedy proved if not worse than, nearly as bad as, the disease. Certainly the new arrivals slew rabbits, but they killed also the native birds. The New Zealanders could make out a case for trying what cats could do to help them, however indiscreet the importation of the other natural foes of the rabbit. Sable Island off the Nova Scotian coast had been overrun with rabbits since 1830; cats were brought in about 1880 and within a very few years there were no rabbits left. But then Sable Island possessed no wingless birds, as does New Zealand.

It was about the year 1890 that Mr. Rodier, who owned some 64,000 acres of pasture in New South Wales, hit upon a plan for decimating rabbits which has given good results. In this country the rabbit is held monogamous, the contented husband of one wife; Mr. Rodier found good reason to think that the animal, established in the Antipodes, renounced the principles of his species and became polygamous; and it was on this assumption he based his system of destruction—the fewer does the better, because the fewer progeny. The aim therefore must be to kill off the does. He set to work; and during twelve years and three months to the end of 1903 he caught alive 42,484 rabbits of which number 16,807 were bucks and 25,677 were does—65·45 males to 100 females, which confirms his opinion that the rabbit in Australia is polygamous. Now, polygamy makes for the increase of a species while polyandry does the reverse; wherefore Mr. Rodier killed all the females he caught and released the bucks after marking them so that they should not, if recaptured, be counted again. The results of this method during the ensuing

years were instructive : in 1904 for every 100 does caught and killed 53.4 bucks were caught and released ; in 1907, pit traps being used, eighty-five bucks were released for every 100 does caught ; and the difference between the herbage on Mr. Rodier's side of the wire-netting fence and on that of his neighbours testified to the decrease in the rabbit population. Things had developed as he anticipated ; the males exceeding the females, they harassed the latter to such a degree that their breeding opportunities were curtailed with the natural result—fewer young. Moreover, the bucks contracted the habit of killing young ones. Mr. Rodier's plan, if generally adopted, would go far to relieve Australia and the other colonies of the plague from which they have suffered for so long.

II.

Let us turn to the case of birds imported into our colonies and America for one reason or another ; we will take the sparrow in America first. There is no lack of information on the subject as the United States Department of Agriculture collected details from some 3,000 persons and embodied the digested results in a ' Bulletin ' of over 350 pages.

The reason for importing sparrows into the States is obscure ; one authority affirms that the only explanation is the desire of British settlers to hear again the familiar chirp ; another opines that the bird's reputation as an insect-eater led to the belief that sparrows would be an acceptable addition to the avi-fauna of the continent. Where the sparrow acquired that reputation it is hard to guess ; about 75 per cent of his diet, as proved by examination of many series of crops, consists of corn, with a small admixture of seeds of noxious weeds. Whatever the reason or reasons, considerable pains were taken to acclimatise the sparrow ; the first attempt was made in 1850 when eight pairs were landed, caged during the winter and released early in the following spring. These did not thrive. In 1852 a committee of the Brooklyn Institute was chosen to arrange for the importation of sparrows ; over 200 dollars was subscribed for expenses, and an order given for the collection and shipment of the birds at Liverpool. About 100 sparrows and some song-birds were sent over, and fifty of the former were released at the Narrows ; the rest, or such as survived the winter, were given their freedom in Greenwood Cemetery, as a safe haunt, and placed under the care of a watchman. These did thrive ; and thus encouraged the misguided lovers of the sparrow sent for more ; various

consignments varying from half a dozen to 1,000 individual birds were imported and sent in batches larger or smaller to sixteen different towns of the Union. It is to be observed that pains were taken to distribute sparrows; at those sixteen places the birds came direct from Europe; but there was widespread desire to have them, and the Department of Agriculture compiled a list of over 100 towns in the States and Canada to which sparrows were taken and set free. Completeness is not claimed for that list; on the contrary, we are told that it represents only a fraction of the whole, and a very small fraction at that. Further, sparrows distributed themselves; one factor in their spread was the birds' occasional choice of a grain car on the railway as a roost; no doubt they had been feeding on the waste corn and went to bed when their crops were full; and the grain car which served as bedroom might be railed away hundreds of miles during the night; thus when it was opened the sparrows found themselves in country where they had theretofore been unknown. Corn droppings from laden cars also helped in distribution; the sparrows followed these along the railways and thus by degrees discovered pastures new.

And the sparrow was everywhere welcomed—at first; boxes in which sparrows might nest were set up; the Law took them under its wing, making it an offence punishable by fine to kill one. In some states the fine was five dollars; in others they came near to canonising the bird and it cost the slayer of a sparrow twenty-five dollars. And all owing to that mistaken idea that the bird was an indefatigable eater of insects. Be it admitted that sparrows do eat insects when they are unable to get anything else, also give them to the nestlings; but, as already said, corn forms their staple diet.

Some years elapsed before people in America, agriculturists more particularly, began to doubt the value of the sparrow, especially when it spread with extraordinary rapidity and a single pair raised from four to six broods per annum. Sparrows are sufficiently prolific in this country, but they do not breed at such an immoderate pace as that, and it is not wonderful that the American farmer began to regard them with a jaundiced eye. The rapidity of distribution is shown by the table published in that 'Bulletin,' thus:

From 1870 to 1875 the bird spread over 500 square miles, from 1875 to 1880 over 15,640, and from 1880 to 1885 over 500,760.

Not to labour the point, in 1898 the familiar chirp might be heard over a range estimated at a million square miles or more—probably

more, as the data on which the Canadian figures are based are admitted to be incomplete.

An exhaustive series of enquiries was set on foot by the Bureau of Agriculture; a *questionnaire* was circulated asking for information and opinions: (1) Was the sparrow harmful (a) to the farming interest? (b) To the market-gardening industry? (c) To trees and shrubs? (2) Did it drive away useful native birds? A small minority returned answers in the bird's favour; but the weight of evidence and opinion was dead against him; and the halcyon days of the sparrow in America were over. His good qualities were recognised; he was brave, he was sagacious, he was exemplary in his domestic relations—other birds might desert their young in time of stress, but the sparrow, never. It was unfortunate—for the bird—that his very virtues only aggravated his offences; his courage was proven by the determination wherewith he expelled useful native species; his sagacity in (we may suspect the play of imagination here) the discretion which taught him to feed among the poultry so that he couldn't be shot; and verily when a bird is officially described as 'a curse of such virulence that it ought to be systematically attacked and destroyed before it becomes necessary to deplete the public treasury for the purpose,' assiduous care of too numerous families cannot be accounted praiseworthy.

Protective measures were dropped; then a price was set on the head of the once-cherished sparrow—one cent per head for lots of not fewer than twenty-five; it was made an offence to feed, shelter or encourage him in any way; nesting-boxes were to come down; anyone who interfered with or hindered destroyers of sparrows were to be fined—clear indication that he still had some friends; firearms, traps and poison were advocated; in a word anything and everything might be done to promote slaughter. Bounties on eggs were considered, but the idea was abandoned; young America, acting doubtless on private encouragement, had found that if, say, two eggs of a clutch were taken the bird would go on laying up to thirty-five or forty; a fact that must prove less profitable to the State than to the boy.

I came upon a paragraph in some newspaper wherein it was asserted that Nature, with rare consideration, had stepped in to relieve suffering America; a 'malarial parasite,' the writer stated, had made its appearance and was sweeping off the sparrow in tens of thousands; and only the sparrow; that benevolent parasite did not attack native birds, and native birds were gradually returning

to the haunts whence they had been expelled. It seemed too good to be true; a parasite so discriminating that it killed off one passerine species and did not hurt all the others was a marvel; particularly when it destroyed the species of which a vast country wished to be rid. Pardonable doubts assailed my mind; but inasmuch as the writer of that paragraph did not give the source of his information I acted on its face value and wrote to the United States Department of Agriculture for information: When did that parasite appear? Did it really prove fatal only to sparrows? Was it as destructive as stated? Were native birds returning to the terrains whence they had been driven? The Officer in Charge of the Food Habits Research of the Bureau of Biological Survey answered my letter with the courtesy and promptitude U.S. officials always display. The Research staff had never heard of that parasite. More, they did not believe there had been any great reduction such as might be attributed to a disease. What they did know was that sparrows were by no means as common as they used to be in the large cities; and that was easily explained by the almost entire elimination of the horse in favour of the motor which drops no food for birds of any kind. For the rest, the sparrow was still common enough in suburban districts and about farm buildings; it continued to do considerable damage and drive out other birds; and was still extending its range. So that was that. The paragraphist had invented that parasite; and America still mourns the day she acquired sparrows.

The United States made experiment with other birds—song-birds, they are called officially—the skylark, blackbird and greenfinch; though what the last named is doing in such company it is hard to say; we can only conclude that somebody who did not know the bird was misled by the alternative name of 'green linnet,' for his warmest admirer would not claim for the greenfinch the gift of song. It is curious and regrettable that birds whose conduct in England leaves nothing to desire should fall from grace when they are transferred to another land; so it was with the three above mentioned: the skylark soon displayed an appetite for turnip seed, the greenfinch one for newly sown grain, and the blackbird was 'accused' of stealing strawberries. That accusation was well founded; it was no new sin. Between the blackbird and myself is but one bone of contention, and that is his passion for strawberries; he will search all round and about the nets for a way in, and when he has found one and eaten his fill (consisting of a bite from numerous

berries), he can't find his way out. And when released he is as abusive as though it were my fault and I had been guilty of unlawfully detaining him. This by the way; the only thing to be said in favour of those three is that they have not increased to an extent which earns for them the brand of criminality.

The starling was offered American citizenship several times from 1872, but always declined it, dying out unanimously, until 1890 when about eighty birds, released in New York Central Park, found their surroundings satisfactory and settled down; other consignments of starlings were made thereafter, and the majority of reports say they were doing 'remarkably well.' Much was expected of the bird as a foe of noxious insects, but he has not quite lived up to the character he took with him from Europe: on the contrary, ten years after that colony became established in New York, those who made it their business to keep an eye on his doings felt obliged to report that his behaviour was 'not above suspicion, and his usefulness was still open to question.' The ornithologists, doubtless, had in mind the record of the starling in New Zealand, and that was not encouraging.

In 1874 an endeavour was made to acclimatise the great tit at Cincinnati, but it failed, and apparently was not repeated; this proceeding was rather gratuitous as America has several tits of her own and hardly needs another.

III.

The story of the starling in New Zealand offers an instructive lesson in the facility with which a bird will change its habits—one might say its nature—in favouring conditions. Somebody, whose name has not been handed down to infamy, imported a few birds in 1867, and the adaptable fowl soon settled down. Here again great things were expected of him; in England the starling had earned a name as the staunch friend of the farmer, the sworn foe of leather-jackets, grub of the daddy-long-legs, and other injurious larvæ and insects. His good name—then—was well deserved; an examination of one hundred and seventy-five crops made by Mr. John Gilmour in 1896 showed that the food consisted of 75 per cent insects, 20 per cent grain, waste for the most part, and 5 per cent other substances. The remains of some useful insects were brought to light, but the majority eaten were harmful. After this revealing examination the starling stood out as first member of the Agricultural Order of Merit.

For a short time the New Zealand farmers and fruit-growers were able to congratulate themselves on their acquisition ; but ere long doubts arose. The wonderful way in which the climate agreed with starlings seems to have been the original source of those doubts. In 1870, only three years after his arrival, starlings were reported as ' very numerous,' but the utility of the species was such that in 1896 starlings were accorded legal protection ; none might be killed on pain of fine, and the bird continued to increase, which was not singular having regard to the change of domestic habit ; in this country the starling raises two broods in the year ; the New Zealand climate and food had such a vivifying effect that five broods per annum became the rule. He continued to eat insects ; but soon revealed a preference for ' other substances,' namely the fruit he had been imported to protect. His tastes were catholic ; he ate apples, pears, plums, peaches and figs ; and fruit-growers realised that what had been a blessing was become a curse of the worst kind. One man stated that starlings ate in half an hour apples enough to fill ten cases ; and a case contains 40 to 42 lb. We need not accept the word ' ate ' in its full sense ; when he has plenty of fruit from which to choose the starling takes a few pecks at one apple or pear and if it drops to the ground, as is likely to happen, he passes on to the next and takes a mouthful or two from that ; and a single wound in an apple destroys it for packing uses.

As with the sparrow in America so was it with the starling in New Zealand ; it spread with amazing speed over the country ; districts where the bird had been unknown were invaded and colonised by thousands within three years ; and, again as in America, the useful native birds were ousted. By 1905 the starling plague had attained dimensions which moved the Agricultural Societies to petition government ; they wanted drastic measures adopted for extermination ; if the numbers were not reduced to reasonable proportions fruit-growers must abandon their industry altogether. The law protecting the starling was repealed, though we may be sure the suffering colonists did not wait for that to do what in them lay towards ridding their lands of the pest.

The truth is that the starling had been introduced into New Zealand before he was found out ; not long ago one met people who denied that starlings ate fruit at all ; that if a bird were seen pecking at apple or pear, that apple or pear concealed a grub which was the legitimate object of the bird's search. I am not prepared to say that starlings did *at first* attack fruit for its own sake ; my belief

is that in their probings for grubs they discovered that apples and pears are good to eat and have continued to eat them ever since this pleasing—to them—discovery was made. Even now you may be told that starlings and blackbirds attack juicy fruit only because they are athirst; that if bowls of water are set about the orchard they will slake their thirst thereat and leave the fruit alone. I did think that with the Thames so close at hand birds might drink therefrom, but being a docile person I put down numerous bowls and kept them full. The water thus supplied was much appreciated—for bathing; the starlings and blackbirds ate the fruit as before; they display no nice preferences; all they ask is that apple or pear shall be ripe and juicy; eating and cooking apples are alike to them.

Now is to be reviewed the career of the mongoose in Jamaica; as what may be called a reformed character he is no longer to be classed with 'Natural Enemies.' The 'canepieces,' otherwise sugar plantations, were sorely damaged by rats, brown and black; the latter was the original inhabitant, but this species was displaced by the brown, also known as the Norwegian and Hanoverian, rat, which came over from Europe in ships. These vermin were so mischievous that the planters on some estates spent £300 a year in endeavours to destroy them. All efforts failing, Mr. Bancroft Espeut in 1872 had an inspiration. He was acquainted with the mongoose in India and knew that mongeese (if the convenient inaccuracy may be forgiven) eat rats, snakes and lizards; here, manifestly, was the very fellow to deal with the superabundant rats. In February of that year Mr. Espeut imported four male and five female mongeese, and turned them out to fend for themselves. The animals thrived; they killed the rats; they spread all over the island, even unto the mountain-tops; and the planters blessed whole-heartedly Mr. Espeut and the mongoose. For at least ten years the beast enjoyed all the privileges of a benefactor; the decrease in rats was so remarkable that in 1882 it was calculated that their destroyer had saved the sugar industry no less than £45,000 a year. No doubt there were thoughtful souls who asked what the mongeese were going to live on when they had finished the rats; certainly Jamaica produces lizards and snakes, but were there enough of these to maintain swelling hordes of this benefactor? And would the beasts be content with lizards and snakes? Jamaica would see.

Jamaica did see. The rat is a very intelligent creature, and finding life on the ground grow perilous it adopted arboreal habits, taking to the trees; comparative security was also secured by the

fact that the mongoose is not out of bed before 9 a.m., and rats, as we all know, are for the most part wrapped in slumber by that time. Under these circumstances the mongoose was obliged to vary his diet; and he did it, revealing a catholic appetite. He ate snakes and lizards as expected, but it became only too obvious that he liked other meats as well—kids, lambs, young pigs, puppies, kittens, the native coney, chickens, game-birds and any other birds that nest on or near the ground within reach of an active and hungry mongoose. He came near to exterminating the quail, imported from America, and the little ground dove; the latter species saved itself by following the example of the rats; the birds gave up nesting on the ground and resorted to cactus, shrubs and trees. Owners of poultry who suffered had recourse to traps, and were gratified to discover that the mongoose is very easy to take. Mr. H. H. Cousins, lately Director of Agriculture in Jamaica, to whom I am indebted for information on the recent history of the animal, tells me that his daughter accounted for sixteen mongeese in a few weeks, using one cage trap and aided by a bull terrier. The mongoose was not satisfied with domestic animals and birds; he ate frogs, turtles' eggs and land crabs; he acquired vegetarian tastes and ate ripe bananas, pineapples, Indian corn and sweet potatoes among other fruits of the earth not mean for him. Before another ten years had passed the animal was voted the greatest curse with which an undeserving island had ever been afflicted.

Then Nature stepped in and slowly restored the balance. Ticks for long had been a pest on the cattle; about twenty-five years ago they attacked the mongoose, causing debilitation; lowered vitality and impaired reproductive powers brought about reduction in the numbers of the beast; and another factor operating in the same direction was the decrease in acceptable foods. The mongoose was compelled to make a change in his diet. Examination of stomachs made during two years by Mr. S. Lockett of the Department of Agriculture, disclosed the fact that the food of the mongoose chiefly consisted of insects, beetles, caterpillars, etc.

Mr. Cousins says he 'regards the mongoose as having played a very successful part in freeing the sugar-cane fields from the rat pest in Jamaica, and that the benefit to the industry would be about £40,000 per annum.' If two or three species of birds have disappeared through his instrumentality, he has on the other hand exterminated the black and yellow snakes.

Let not the case of the mongoose in Jamaica, however, be held

to qualify the truth that it is unwise to introduce animals and birds into countries where Nature has not put them. We are slow to profit by the misfortunes of other people, but have had lessons read ourselves, first in the grey squirrel, then in the musk rat. For the experiment made with the latter there is no excuse in the face of happenings in Bohemia; from two bucks and three does imported into that country in 1905 has sprung a population estimated in 1927 to amount to 100 millions. An animal or bird may be harmless, even beneficial in its native land, but as a settler elsewhere it becomes an intolerable nuisance.

OF LITTLE FAITH.

I SAID, when the word came, 'She will break
Like a tall ship riven by the shore.'
As a dream, I saw the white sails shake,
The masts fall, heard the smoking combers roar.
I saw the black reef shatter the broken hull,
I saw the dead ship drop from the shore's embrace
And over the empty waters only a screaming gull
Winging its endless way to mark the tragic place.
I felt the blown spume cut like driven snow,—
'As a tall ship goes,' I said, 'so she will go.'

I raised my head. I saw her stand
Like a tall ship won home from a gale.
Her eyes like the deep sea far from land,
Her white face calm as a sleeping sail.
The touch of her hand was cool as spray,
And her smile like the ripple at the prow
Of a tall ship going its silent way
Through an old swell, quietly breathing now,
After a storm. I said, 'She has shown to me
The deathless glory of the ageless sea.'

HAROLD T. PULSIFER.

Maine.

THE NOSEGAY.

BY SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER.

'So you're doing a bit of mountaineering,' said the voice from over the hedge.

Mary Matlask, standing on a kitchen chair in the middle of her garden path, cast a look of contained hate at her neighbour. A worse neighbour no woman who loved a garden could have. Her hens came through the hedge, her thistledown floated over it; she kept a rolling tom-cat and three children who played at ball.

'My roses grow so high,' said Mary Matlask, 'that I can't reach them from the ground.'

She was an old woman, so bleached and brittle that it seemed as though the rays of the sun, beating down on her, might snap her in two. The kitchen-chair rocked on the uneven path. Its seat was slippery, it was not easy for her to keep her footing, and to stand so, with her arms stretched above her head, turned her giddy. But there she must stay, impaled on Mrs. Colley's ravening gaze. Pride would not let her descend without her flower; malice delayed the gathering of it, for she knew full well that Mrs. Colley only waited to see which of the few blossoms she would pick; and so she remained, uneasily poised, snipping off the withered blooms.

At last, yielding to a continuous yelling from her cottage, Mrs. Colley withdrew. Smiling disdainfully, Mary Matlask ceased snipping off the withered heads, and watched her go. Then once more she raised her arms, swiftly, excitedly, her uneasy balance forgotten. Her expression had changed. With a look of awed delight she reached for a pink rose-bud, and cut it carefully from the branch.

It was the last bud the tree would put forth that summer. It had only opened that morning, it was still faultlessly virginal and brilliant. She eyed it with solemn satisfaction. It was exactly what she needed, the perfect centre for her nosegay.

All her life Mary Matlask had made nosegays, constructing each after the same pattern—with a central flower, a boss, and

round it concentric bands of other flowers, and the whole finished off with a rim of leaves or fern. The materials of the bouquet varied with the season, but the manner was always the same. In spring there might be a centre of blue violets, rimmed with tightly packed primroses, or the first double daffodil ramparted with wallflowers; in the autumn the centre swelled to a massive dahlia with asters and marigolds encircling it, their colours clashing resolutely but their formation strictly preserved. But the best nosegays were the summer nosegays, whose centre could be a rose.

Proud of her art, sure of her mastery, Mary Matlask went on composing nosegays as stubbornly as Cezanne went on painting apples. She gave them to children, to brides, to the bed-ridden, to the dead. She gave them to her landlord when she paid her rent. She gave them to Mr. Trudge, who lived in a dusty bungalow writing books on economics, and who never remembered to put them in water. She gave them to Mrs. Daniels at the Manor, who only lived for hunting, and to Mrs. Cullibere, the rector's wife, who worked on a handloom and felt sure that flowers should look natural. She gave them to the postman, to the baker, to visitors who paused outside her cottage to say it was the prettiest in the village; and during June and July, when the plentifulness of her garden drove her to a frenzy of artistic expression, she gave them to Mrs. Colley.

But this nosegay was a different pair of shoes. It had been commissioned, it was, at last, a recognition of her art. This very morning she had received a letter from Mrs. Chichester, whose nurse, so long ago, she had been—a letter saying:

'It is ages since I saw you, but I still remember the posies you used to make. Do you still make them? And could you make one to-morrow? For Miss Ursula—my baby daughter—you remember her, but now she is almost grown-up—wants one for a dance. She will drive over to-morrow, with a friend of hers, some time early in the afternoon, on the chance that you can manage to give her one. If you have a rose left in the garden, please put a rose in the middle.'

It was a pity that they had not been able to give her longer notice; she would have liked to meditate the work of art for a previous day or two. And it was a pity that the request had not come earlier in the summer, when the pinks were blooming, and white flowers more plentiful. A nosegay for a young lady

should contain a good deal of white, to be suitable. But she had the essential, the rose, the year's last and loveliest. There was a song about that, thought Mary Matlask. '*All its lovely companions are faded and gone.*' And carrying the rose indoors, where it should repose in a basin until the moment of assembling the nosegay arrived, she began to sing, till the thought that Mrs. Colley might be listening checked her shrill staggering voice.

This would be one in the eye for Mrs. Colley. A car driving up to the door, two young ladies, both in the height of fashion, stepping out, the chauffeur attending on them; and all to carry away a nosegay made by Mary Matlask. Pray God the woman would be at home! Were she not, she would hear about it; such things do not happen in a village without bruit; but seeing would be better than believing.

All that morning, under the scorching sun, Mary Matlask walked up and down her garden, prospecting and pillaging. It was not to be lightly undertaken, this masterpiece. Her most exquisite taste must be invoked. Marigolds, for instance, would never do; their smell could not be permitted in a ballroom. But there were the everlasting peas, pink and white, elegant on their short stalks. There were the montbretias, whose orange sprays would make a delicate sprigged border to the built-up composition. There were the white asters to ring the central rose, and the mauve asters to surround the white; and by picking all she had, and by careful spacing, a further ring of alternate crimson and yellow carnations could be contrived. Carnations were very genteel flowers. Gentlemen wore them in their button-holes, and who knew but that, this very night, some fine young gentleman might not beg one of Mary Matlask's clove carnations from Miss Ursula's nosegay?

The picture of the nosegay became so clear in her mind's eye that when, the materials gathered, she came to build it up, it seemed to her that never had the work of assemblage been so easy, never had she worked so deftly nor so infallibly. But when the completed masterpiece had been firmly bound with wool, and put in a bucket under a damp cloth to stand on the watered cold stone of the outhouse, Mary Matlask was shaking from head to foot and ravaged by such a headache that a cup of tea was all she felt equal to for her lunch.

The clock ticked so loudly that it seemed as though its vibrations would shake down the house. Its pale face stared at her.

'I must go upstairs,' she thought, 'put on my best dress and smarten myself.' Her shaking hands drove the pin of her brooch into her flesh. She dropped the comb and broke it, she spilled the little flask of lavender water.

Downstairs the clock was louder than ever. She began to set the table for tea; for it would only be proper to offer a cup of tea, whether they condescended to it or no. Ladies drank China tea, she knew; and China tea was not to be bought at the post office; but by making the Indian tea very weak she might be able to offer a cup without offence. Earlier in that long arduous morning she had polished the tea-things and baked scones and rock-cakes. Now it only remained to cut the bread and butter and the lettuce sandwiches. But if the young ladies were coming in the car they might be hungry, they might like a boiled egg with their tea. Mary kept no hens; she dared not go as far as the farm in case the car arrived; for fresh eggs, stooping her pride, she must enquire at Mrs. Colley's.

To Mrs. Colley's she went, carrying a formal basket, holding up her skirts lest the slops of that threshold should sully them.

'I am expecting visitors,' she said. 'Two young ladies who will come in a car.'

'Haven't they enough to eat at home?' asked Mrs. Colley. But in her haughty fat face her eyes sparkled with curiosity, darting in and out like two earwigs in a turnip.

The kettle was set to boil, and the saucepan for the eggs. Delayed by her errand next door, Mary Matlask was in a panic lest the water should not boil before the two young ladies came; and she raked and fed the range till it blazed. Kettle and saucepan had been twice emptied and twice renewed before the car drew up at the gate. There was no chauffeur to spring out and hold open the door. It was a tiny car, open, little larger than the coffin of a motor-bicycle. Only the suddenness of its arrival and the imperious loudness of its horn could uphold it in the watching eyes of Mrs. Colley.

But the young ladies, for all they were so queerly dressed, Miss Ursula's friend even in trousers, were grand enough and condescending enough to quell a regiment of Colleys, choosing that moment to hang out their disgracing underclothes on the line, staring for all they were worth. 'Darling old Mat!' cried Miss Ursula, 'of course we should love an egg to our tea. How

sweet of you to think of it !' And in the middle of the garden she flung her arms round Mary Matlask and kissed her.

Torn between pride and anguish Mary attended their praising progress round her denuded garden, knowing that Mrs. Colley behind the hedge was overhearing every gracious word, knowing that in another minute the eggs (why had she not got four, got six ?) would be hard-boiled. Hard-boiled they were. Miss Ursula's friend barely ate more than the top of hers ; but for all that the tea-party went with a swing, wave on wave of pride and excitement surging through Mary Matlask as passionately as the waves of her headache crashed each after each to its climax under her neatly combed parting. Such affable young ladies. And the window being open, and their voices so clear, Mrs. Colley would certainly overhear every word they spoke.

Now from its stone-floored cloister and its damp veil emerged the nosegay. This should have been the crowning moment, and if admiration could make it so it would have been. But suddenly conscious of a fault in hospitality Mary Matlask realised that the other young lady should have a nosegay too. Not so fine as Miss Ursula's, of course ; but still, a nosegay. Trembling, stiffened against the waves of her headache and her fears of doing amiss, of not seeming respectful enough, she heard herself speak the decisive words.

'Oh, Miss Ursula, if you could spare another five minutes, I should so like to gather a few flowers for the other young lady. That is, if she'd accept them.'

'Why, Mat, of course. Another nosegay ! How sweet of you. She'd love one. Wouldn't you, Nonny ?'

'Adore one,' replied the young lady in trousers.

All together they walked into the garden, still raked by Mrs. Colley's attention, Miss Ursula most recklessly brandishing her nosegay in the sun. For a while they followed her round, asking the name of this flower and that ; then they drew apart, talking to each other, seeking the shade of the elder-tree in the hedge. Eavesdropping Mrs. Colley crept nearer. 'She will hear every word,' thought Mary Matlask. 'She will know now how grand they are, even if she didn't know before. For they will certainly be talking of the ball.'

Without their assistance the selection of a second nosegay became easier. At first it had seemed to her that there was not a flower left in the garden ; but released into creative solitude

she soon became carried away, and it appeared that the second nosegay might almost equal the first, though alas! for its centre there was no rose, only a begonia.

Absorbed in her art she hurried about the garden, tearing at the fuchsia, gathering and discarding. Now for the final flourish of asparagus fern. It grew near where they were standing, a dense thicket. But they were deep in conversation, they would not mind her coming near. They had no notion, disregarding beings from a higher world, that Mrs. Colley, pressed against the hedge, was gulping down their every word.

'Isn't she an old pet?' said Miss Ursula. The gentry spoke like that, tossing away words as they tossed away shillings and half-crowns.

'Enchanting,' answered the friend, 'and makes the sweetest lettuce sandwiches. But, my dear, what will you do with that vegetation? You don't propose to wear it, do you, all chewed up with greenfly, and crawling with earwigs?'

'My God, no! But I wanted a specimen of the genuine Victorian article, for Wallers to copy in proper flowers. I shall drop it with them on the way back. There will be plenty of time.'

'I see,' said the friend. 'Quite a good . . . Hush! Here she comes. Look what she's got for me!'

THE ART OF NONSENSE.

BY MURIEL KENT.

I.

IN his delightful study of Lewis Carroll ¹ Mr. Walter de la Mare has proved once more his peculiar sensitiveness to the more delicate tones of literature, and his gift of reproducing them in his own criticism. He begins by an attempt to find the true significance of Nonsense—'this Victorian wild flower, . . . this indefinable "cross" between humour, phantasy and a sweet unreasonableness, . . . in full bloom under the very noses of Martin Tupper and Samuel Smiles!' He is wholly delighted to find this hybrid flourishing in the cultivated garden; but his analysis of its parts and properties leaves us wondering still at its growth and luxuriance—as he intends that we should. He finds himself unable to come to the real subject of his essay except by way of a digression on that earlier master of the art of Nonsense, Edward Lear, to whom he first pays homage. For Lear might almost be called the creator of the 'pure and absolute' kind, which he said had always been his aim, and to which he attained with such consummate ease.

The inventive genius of Lear, as of Lewis Carroll, which brought forth in verse, or drawings, or tales, a fresh and durable humour, could be no other than a cradle gift—bestowed, too, at a time when it was especially needed in contemporary England. For, as Mr. de la Mare notes with satisfaction, this Nonsense was an astonishing reaction from the stiff and heavily improving style of most writers for children in the earlier years of the nineteenth century. It increases our belief in the inherent sanity of our race when we remember that the adult generation who hailed with joy the first *Book of Nonsense*, in 1846, had been nourished on stories, hymns and poems that contained fearful warnings blended with moral instruction—not always so attractively given as in *The Cowslip* (1811), which, with its vivid contrasts of childish vice and virtue and its charming little woodcuts, had a great popularity in the nursery for many years.

It is very likely that the two authors, Lear and Dodgson, who

¹ First published in *The Eighteen-Eighties*. Reprinted separately in 1932.

'swept the cobwebs from the sky' so effectually, were themselves brought up on children's books of the type of Miss Horwood's *Original Poetry for Young Minds*, which had reached its third, 'enlarged and improved' edition in 1823. Though Miss Horwood lacked the ability of Ann and Jane Taylor in writing verse, she held that the *morality* of her subjects must make them 'useful to the rising generation, however they may be wanting in the brilliancy of poetic colouring.' Her laudable intention was 'to inculcate general Humanity . . . to the creatures beneath us'; but it is not clear whether she referred only to the beasts and fishes, the 'oysters and muscles' [*sic*] that figure in her poems, or whether the lower order of creation included also the orphans, the destitute, and even Ann the maid, who seem to be equally the objects of her benevolent condescension. Parents—the pragmatical mamma, and the pompous father who takes his 'little dears' to walk, and listen to his tales, among the tombstones—are the chief mouth-pieces of Miss Horwood's teaching; and they would certainly have regarded Nonsense as unworthy of grown-up attention, and far too frivolous for the young.

From such a stiff and frigid world Lear and Carroll escaped into that kingdom which remains unexplored by the generality and undesired save by its freeborn sons. They were at home among its anomalies, its whims and pranks; and the speech of their fellow-subjects must always have borne for those two the exact reverse of the dictionary meaning—'words or language which have no meaning.' All the quips and quirks, the occasional deliberate distortions or malapropisms of Nonsense, were to them significant and acceptable variations of their native tongue—and this in spite of the seriousness with which they followed their other avocations.

I do not know whether the question of Lewis Carroll's debt to his older contemporary has ever been examined; but if C. L. Dodgson, at the age of fourteen, was introduced to the *Book of Nonsense*, it must have influenced his own natural bent considerably. A determined commentator might find the White Knight's prototype in Lear's propitious Old Man 'who sat on a horse when he reared'; or trace the Wonderland attitude of mind to the predications of Lear's verses and drawings. But the originality of both writers and the wide difference in their way of treating nonsensical themes are much more remarkable. Perhaps their real affinity was with the anonymous makers of nursery rhymes; with lyrical absurdities like 'The Three Jovial Huntsmen,' and Oliver Goldsmith's favourite

song about the old woman who was tossed 'seventeen times as high as the moon'; with the queer logic of the Man of Thessaly, and the gay inconsequence of Samuel Foote's 'Great Panjandrum himself, with the little round button on top'—inseparable from Randolph Caldecott's lively illustrations, to those who remember them.

Although the limerick is said to be of Irish origin, Professor Ernest Weekley suggests that 'the choice of the word may have been partly due to the somewhat earlier *learic*, coined (by Father Matthew Russell, S.J.) from *Edward Lear*.' At any rate, this form of verse, based on 'There was an old man of Tobago,' was suggested to Lear by a friend as 'lending itself to limitless variety for rhymes and pictures'; and it so exactly suited his own ideas that his name will always be associated with the art of limerick-writing. Mr. de la Mare distinguishes between his achievements in this field, and their countless imitations:

'There are two distinct orders of them: the mere Limerick and the Lear Limerick. They differ more than mushrooms from moonshine. Mere Limericks, ingenious, harmless, orthodox, may be scribbled with an effort at the rate of about two a minute. A genuine Lear Limerick—and that only derivative—is unlikely to be the reward of a precious moment more than once or twice in a lifetime.'

The same critic adds that 'there are heretics who find the last line of the Lear kind timid, disappointing and insipid, who prefer wit in its place—even cleverness!' These argue that a strong last line, introducing a new rhyme, is essential to the perfect limerick. It is really a matter of temperament whether we prefer the more elaborate construction, and an epigrammatic climax, or Lear's spontaneous verses, 'struck off with a pen,' as he once explained; intended only to amuse by their ridiculous characters, who were made concrete and convincing by his drawings.

Edward Lear must surely be among the eugenists' hard cases, for this genial, imaginative, talented artist was the youngest of twenty-one children (possibly the fact which inspired his lines about the Old Man who

. . . fed twenty sons
Upon nothing but buns . . .);

and, being orphaned at an early age, he began when only fifteen to earn small sums by making drawings of birds on cardboard,

and selling them to local shops. Four years later he was employed at the Zoological Gardens; and while sketching there one day, he attracted the notice of a visitor. This was Lord Derby, who invited him to Knowsley, where Lear spent four years, studying the birds and animals in the Earl's private menagerie, preparing his first book, *Illustrations of the Family of the Psittacidae* (1832), and producing, for the entertainment of the numerous children of the house, his famous collection of rhymes and sketches, afterwards published in the *Book of Nonsense*.

There was an interval of sixteen years before *More Nonsense* appeared, but meanwhile Lear had published two volumes on his travels as a landscape painter in Greece and Albania. When we consider his later *Songs*, we realise that he had not only discovered and explored a new continent of Nonsense, but that he had also mapped out its physical features, with the result that 'the land where the Bong Tree grows' is presently identified as the great Gromboolian plain; and in the distance stand

. . . the towering heights
Of the Hills of the Chankly Bore.

It is a country populated with the most fantastic beings, the Jumblies, the Dong with the luminous nose, and the toeless Pobble; and having a fauna to match. The Owl and the Pussy Cat, whose adventures are the theme of Lear's most tuneful and irresistible song, reach its coast after a voyage of a year and a day, and celebrate their wedding with a dance by moonlight on the shore. But the Nonsense folk and animals who belong, not to any remote topography, but to Europe or England, claim our special affection. From the superior 'Old Person of Cromer, who stood on one leg to read Homer,' and the 'courageous Young Lady of Norway' who showed such amazing *aplomb* when squeezed flat in a doorway, down to the white pigs who listened attentively to 'several jigs' played on a silver-gilt flute, and the birds who congregated on the complacent Young Lady's bonnet—all these seem credible and familiar, however unusual in behaviour.

Nor can we forget what Mr. de la Mare calls 'perhaps the greatest triumph' of Lear's invention; that embodiment of public opinion which always appears as 'They' in his verses, but is represented in the drawings sometimes by a group, sometimes by a single figure. The dispositions and actions of these choric characters vary; and, as Calverley said, 'mostly for the worse.' They

ask the most fatuous and ill-timed questions, like the one put to an Old Man in a tree—

‘Who was horribly bored by a Bee;
When they said “Does it buzz?”
He replied, “Yes, it does!
It’s a regular brute of a Bee!”’

Still more futile was the query, ‘Is it hot?’ addressed to the man who had ‘rushed down the crater of Etna’; and one feels that sheer exasperation made him retort, ‘No, it’s not!’ They are lavish with advice and criticism, but rarely give much practical help to those in awkward situations.

And there are times when the ubiquitous Pronouns become tyrannical in their treatment of harmless eccentrics—

‘They said “If you choose
To boil eggs in your shoes,
You cannot remain at Thermopylae.”’

Their conduct was still more unreasonable and violent on another occasion:

‘There was an Old Man of Whitehaven,
Who danced a quadrille with a Raven;
But they said, “It’s absurd
To encourage this bird!”
So they smashed that Old Man of Whitehaven.’

Bigotry could go no further; and Lear’s drawing of the partners—so earnestly and happily intent on their steps—only heightens our indignation against those who condemned them.

Lear, however, was no partisan. He reports events in that strange world of his without passing judgment on the actors. Indeed, its ways and standards resemble those of W. S. Gilbert’s dream country of Topsy-Turveydom—

‘Where babies, much to their surprise,
Are born astonishingly wise;
With every Science on their lips,
And Art at all their finger-tips.

Our Judges, pure and wise in tone,
Know crime from theory alone,
And glean the motives of a thief
From books and popular belief.

But there, a Judge who wants to prime
His mind with true ideas of crime,
Derives them from the common sense
Of practical experience.'

Gilbert, even when he crossed the frontiers between wit and Nonsense, remained a satirist. His Baines Carew and his Captain Reece (of the good ship *Mantelpiece*) are too palpably caricatures of an attorney and a naval officer to be mistaken for natives of Lear's territory. Gilbert's taste for mockery and the grotesque, as shown in 'The Yarn of the *Nancy Bell*, 'A Discontented Sugar Broker,' 'The King of Canoodle-Dum,' and 'Sir Macklin'

('He argued high, he argued low,
He also argued round about him'),

gives to *The Bab Ballads* a more sophisticated air, and a sharper flavour to its jests.

II.

Some years ago, M. Emile Cammaerts published in this country, and in his beautiful English, a little book on *The Poetry of Nonsense*. It is a contribution of great value to 'the study of Nonsense literature' which, he says, 'is only in its infancy.' And he proves, by analysis and many quotations, that such a study could only be made in England:

'Nowhere else in Europe do we witness a movement so popular and so widespread as that started by Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll in the Victorian Era. . . . Not only are there no writers comparable with Lear and Carroll, but, even if such writers had flourished on the Continent seventy years ago, their works would not exert any influence on the present generation.

'There seems to be in the English temperament a certain trend of broad humour which predisposes it to appreciate the freaks of the Nonsense spirit, and to enjoy a joke even if there is no point in it.'

M. Cammaerts, like Mr. de la Mare, is concerned with the meaning of Nonsense, and his intimate knowledge of its literature prevents him from giving a narrow interpretation of the term. For instance, he admits that here and there in the writings of Gilbert and C. S. Calverley, particularly 'a certain kind of poem,' in which both delighted, 'combining the characteristics of the riddle and those of the parody,' a nonsensical element may be found. 'They are,' he says, 'in the situation of cousins who can claim to belong

at the same time to the family of nonsense and to the family of witticism.' But, as a rule, parody, satire, double meanings, or topical comments, lie outside the range of the authentic poet of Nonsense; for he does not aim at being either a wit or a moralist. His first purpose is to compel others to share the ridiculous images of his own vision. The power to convey them swiftly, the instinctive choice of alluring rhymes, and the rhythmical perfection of his verse—these are the essentials of his art. Any undue elaboration of the theme, or ingenuity of construction, tends to weaken the effect; since Nonsense-writing, like ballad-making, demands directness and simplicity—very often enhanced by refrains.

In this connection M. Cammaerts quotes the saying of Verlaine: 'De la musique, de la musique, encore et toujours.' He claims for the poetry of Nonsense that

'there is no other class of literature which corresponds more closely to the definition of poetry given by certain modern writers when they tell us that poetry must appeal as much to the ear as it does to the mind, and that the essential task of the poet is "to make music with words." . . . If nonsense poetry is poetry run wild, it is a wildness which preserves and even emphasises its essential qualities. It is not necessarily the highest type of poetry, but it is the most poetical.'

Here is an explanation of the close relationship between the haunting snatches of song which Shakespeare put into the mouths of his Fools and Clowns, or his feigned madmen, and those Nursery Rhymes which have all the appearance of being 'pure and absolute' nonsense, without mythical or historical origins; enduring only by virtue of their lilt, or something wistful in their suggestion:

'If all the world were apple pie,
And all the sea were ink,
And all the trees were bread and cheese,
What *should* we have to drink?'

There was an interval of nearly twenty years between the publication of the first *Book of Nonsense* and that of *Alice in Wonderland*. Meanwhile Thackeray had produced his 'Fireside pantomime,' *The Rose and the Ring* (1854-5), that entrancing story of life at the Court of Paphlagonia, introducing King Valoroso; his daughter, the accomplished Princess Angelica (who 'could answer half a dozen Mangnalls Questions; but then you must take care to ask the *right* ones'); and the comical figures of Prince Bulbo

of Crim Tartary, Glumboso, the Prime Minister, and Countess Gruffanuff. The hero and heroine come triumphantly through all sorts of vicissitudes, aided by the Fairy Blackstick's magic. But it is an extravaganza written in a gay mood 'for great and small children,' and displaying all the author's verve and fun, rather than a work of Nonsense.

During that same period, young Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was editing a succession of family magazines, beginning with *Useful and Instructive Poetry* when he was only thirteen, which was written entirely by himself, and had a brief existence. It was followed by several others which were open to general contribution; but the editor spoke slightly of most of their contents in his Preface to *Misch-Masch*, the latest of his home periodicals. In *The Rectory Umbrella*, started in 1849 or 1850, the future Lewis Carroll was plainly forecasted by his own articles, verses, and spirited illustrations. Already the logician and mathematician were at work, though never outstripping the born humorist. The rare combination of faculties which, in due time, produced the *Alices*, included a disciplined intellect directing his imagination and versatility. Yet, to quote Mr. de la Mare once more, 'The genius of Carroll seems to have worked more subtly than the mind it was possessed by realised. It is a habit genius has.'

Even the realm of Nonsense, as Lewis Carroll saw it, is not founded on a mere 'game of vapours,' but abides by certain traditions and laws. The inhabitants of those regions which lie at the far end of a rabbit-hole, or the other side of a looking-glass, have their own method of reasoning, though their arguments may be as puzzling as the Red Queen's, or those bandied between the First and Second Voices in Lewis Carroll's skilful parody:

'Pitying his obvious distress,
Yet with a tinge of bitterness,
She said "The More exceeds the Less."

Sound argument and grave defence,
Strange questions raised on "Why?" and "Whence?"
And wildly tangled evidence.

When he, with racked and whirling brain,
Feebly implored her to explain,
She simply said it all again.'¹

¹ Published in *The Train*, 1856.

And the people of those countries form very definite conclusions, though they may reach them by standing on their heads, or balancing an eel on their noses, like Father William.

It is often difficult to say where the wisdom of native shrewdness ends and Nonsense begins, when once the restrictions of familiar theories and facts have been left behind. To which order, for instance, does the Irishwoman's saying, recorded by Lady Clodagh Anson, belong? On seeing the first aeroplane flying over the sea, the old countrywoman, regardless of the basket of chickens in her arms, dropped on her knees, exclaiming, 'Ah, glory be to God! There goes a submarine a-skating in the sky!' That improvised description suggests an extra sense, rather than any negation.

The same question might be raised about Humpty-Dumpty's psychological reactions. In the nursery rhyme he is, as M. Cammaerts observes, a 'purely English' creation of whom we know nothing beyond his fatal misadventure. But Lewis Carroll's Humpty-Dumpty is one of his most finished character parts—still a thoroughly English figure, though not of the most amiable type. Even the courteous Alice found him an unsatisfactory companion, testy and contradictory; but not unwilling to improve her mind by his criticism, and with a talent for 'managing' unruly words, and for explaining obscure poems like the 'Jabberwocky'—of which the first verse had appeared earlier as a 'stanza of Anglo-Saxon poetry' in *Misch-Masch*.

Turning, at last, from the works by which the foundations of English Nonsense were well and truly laid, a host of modern jesters remains to be considered, though only a few can be named here. Naturally, Mr. Chesterton, with his enthusiasm for Edward Lear, and all forms of 'celestial wit,' has tried his hand at Nonsense poetry, and has evolved a 'Quoodle.' But, having fallen in love with Paradox long ago, he is really happiest when in her embraces; or juggling with one richly coloured fancy after another; or composing rousing choruses, like the one in 'Songs of Education' which sums up his countrymen as

'The intelligent lot, the intuitive lot,
The infallible lot we are.'

As for Mr. Belloc and Mr. Harry Graham, their rhymes, addressed ostensibly to 'Bad Children' and 'Heartless Homes,' hardly come into the category of Nonsense; and they would be unlikely to appeal to a child's taste—which M. Cammaerts considers the

supreme test in this elusive art. But some of Mr. Milne's 'Christopher Robin' poems have the genuine ring, and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* must be ranked as a masterpiece, if only for its portrait of that swaggering fellow, Toad of Toad Hall—so much less estimable than his friends, but irresistible to all who confess, with Puck :

'And the things do best please me
That befall preposterously.'

But Kenneth Grahame also had a poet's power to 'awaken lost simplicities'; to reveal that aspect of Nonsense which bears a surprising likeness to wisdom or beauty or high imagination. He, like Mr. de la Mare, can lead us back to a borderland state where nothing seems incompatible—neither a dirge that begins 'Who said Peacock Pie?' nor the vision of Pan vouchsafed to Rat and Mole. There we may catch a glimpse of Loving Mad Tom riding abroad, and climb Pillicock's hill, and hear Child Rowland's horn echoed by Little Boy Blue's—all unhindered by Philistines or Olympians.

ST. MARK'S DAY.

HERE where risen incense lingers
Loosely like a veil outspread,
And a host of tapers glimmer
In a mist of holy red,
Sweet, sweet Silence, who doth love me
And whom I have made my own,
In her dress of amber velvet
Kneels with me before a throne.

RICHARDSON GEORGE.

*HARK BACK! VIII.**THE MASTER HAND.*

BY WILFRID JELF.

It was an extraordinarily peaceful evening. On both sides of the road stood the golden harvest waiting to be carried. Here and there partridges called across the stubble, and everywhere a sense of rest after toil filled the August atmosphere with thoughts of God, Church bells in a valley, and villagers at prayer. Here indeed was a peace passing all understanding, reigning as it did between the biggest armies the world had ever seen recoiling from the first interlocking grip of war.

As the old horse neared the crest of the long glacis I stopped to look back. For three miles the road stretched away behind us with no spot or sign of life to break its uncompromising straightness. We seemed at the moment to be positively the end of the army in retreat. On the hill-top to the south-east the Uhlan squadrons were still in bivouac, but there were signs of activity in the horse-lines and the call to boot-and-saddle had evidently roused the troopers from their afternoon rest. To the west the sun lay over the hills while a light autumn mist was already beginning to creep insidiously about the valleys. Then I turned and rode on while the old horse nodded his head philosophically as he pondered over the changes and chances in the mortal life of a charger.

A hundred yards in front and at the top of the rise stood two girls shading their eyes as they anxiously scanned the wide landscape for visible signs of that approaching flood of field-grey which the panic-mongers had been so sedulously foretelling through the length and breadth of the city. No tale of burning village, plunder, or brutality had been too extravagant for the tongues of the mischief-makers, till citizens young and old had been successfully worked up to the most blood-curdling expectations. The two girls, obviously bolder than the rest, had ventured up the road to see for themselves the dust clouds or flashing arms which might portend the descent of the wolf on the fold. As we drew near I could feel

the burning questions that awaited me, questions which I was certainly in no mood to answer. After all there was nothing to tell but that Attila the Hun was on our heels and that the tide of war must now inevitably engulf their city and roll on over it to the Capital!

But the meeting worked out differently. As the two girlish figures met me, I gave them a friendly salute in the hope of establishing some measure of confidence and suggestion that all was still well.

'Bon soir, mes demoiselles!' I called cheerfully and passed on without stopping. Englishmen are notoriously uncommunicative folk perhaps, but this brusque greeting took them by surprise and robbed them of the opening for the detailed interview which they had planned and which one of their own countrymen would most surely have welcomed under similar circumstances. They turned to look after us.

'Il rit, mon Dieu! Il rit!' cried one to the other. Now it is over nineteen years since I heard those words, but I find myself still wondering to-day exactly what they signified. Were they prompted by disgust at the apparent indifference of the foreigner to the woes of the stricken country-side of France? Or were they expressive of some small measure of hope revived? It goes into the endless category of things which will never be known.

Before me lay the road leading down into the town of St. Quentin. There appeared to be strangely little life or movement about its outskirts and I wondered what had become of the inhabitants. At the foot of the hill the road entered the town and led past shuttered windows and closed doors standing back in the shadows of approaching night. Farther on, at the entrance to a wider street which contained the more pretentious buildings, a distant murmur from the direction of the centre of the town could be faintly heard. At the same time first signs of life became noticeable in the surreptitious flittings of sinister figures, significant of the horrors of lawlessness freshly let loose, ghouls of loot and plunder disappearing like bats up dark passages and by-ways at sight of a fully armed soldier.

The true meaning of these activities was obvious enough and the dull roar of a crowd under strong emotions broke out as I emerged on to a corner of the Grande Place. The whole of the population appeared to have assembled there and the town had gone mad—mad with panic and loss of self-control. Wild words

and wilder counsels were passing from mouth to mouth. Wines and spirits were being handed from one to another in reckless abandonment, for the Hun would be in the city before morning and after that nothing would remain to anyone: to eat, drink, and be merry was the order, for the morrow would bring the fate of Tyre and Sidon! Here and there groups of bottle-holders howled snatches of many songs in many keys, while through all the din there ran the pathetic hysteria of suppressed fear and the anguish that knows no outward expression.

I looked down on the pandemonium from the saddle and tried to diagnose the scene. The outstanding and amazing feature seemed to be the number of civilians present of obviously military age and qualification. Why were these not in the field with the French armies to-night? There were here, of course, many of the older generation clearly past the age of recall to the Colours: but these young and middle-aged persons of great volubility and heated complexion, what were they doing here? On closer scrutiny it became obvious that here were represented many nationalities, and that to many the impending entry of the army of Von Kluck was an object of eager expectation, and anything but apprehension. After dismounting and tying up the old horse with others on a standing let into the side of the Town Hall, I walked up the steps of that building in the hope of finding a report centre established from which some sort of information might be derived. The top of the steps outside the main entrance to the building afforded a commanding view of all that was passing in the great square below. The Grande Place was brightly lit by arc light and other illumination, some of it extemporised by flares and torches, and the buildings round it stood out in weird relief yet thrusting the main focal point of the scene on the massive structure of the Town Hall itself.

The babel of sound and the ever-moving masses set imagination running riot. Here in this same square had similar scenes been witnessed from these steps one hundred and twenty years ago under the ægis of the red, white and blue cockade in the shadow of the guillotine. Here had echoed the parrot cry for *Liberté, Fraternité, Égalité* just as similar indistinguishable cries were to be heard to-night. Here the bloodthirsty leaders of half-naked, wholly maddened peasantry and townsfolk had addressed groups of gaping listeners much as they were doing under scarcely more civilised conditions to-day. The walls of these same houses had echoed with the shouts of 'à la Lanterne' and the rolling of the tumbril-

wheels just as they were ringing with the unenlightened screams of hysteria on this August night. The mob of 1914 had reverted to type!

For the first time now it began to dawn on me that the seething masses down below contained a number of lost British soldiers on whom the hospitable attentions of the revellers were being lavishly bestowed with much singing of patriotic airs and cries of 'Vive l'Angleterre!' It was equally self-evident that unless these exhausted warriors were speedily extricated from the attentions of their newly found friends, they would be left behind by the receding tide to be picked up by the enemy in the morning. And at this moment I found at my side a Warrant Officer of Royal Engineers—one of that grand old vintage of which so few bottles are now left, ready with the counsel of the hard-headed and the stout arm of the warrior to serve wherever God and his country should call him.

'Beg pardon, sir,' he was saying: 'Seeing you're the only officer in the town I thought I'd better come up and join you. I've been trying to find a report centre, but these people tell me that it left two hours ago and that all messages were to go on to Ham. It's a long way, but I think Headquarters ought to know what's goin' on here. I never saw nothing like it. There's men got in here as'd go on after their battalions at once if someone could only tell them where to go before these 'ere civvies 'ave fuddled their brains with drink. Why, sir,' he added, lowering his voice, 'there's the remains of two battalions what looks like two companies as have lost all their officers waiting down at the station for a train to take them on. I've told them there won't be no rolling-stock nor engines for them this side of Christmas, but they're still waiting there.'

Here was the old soldier recruited under Victoria, a chip of that nineteenth-century rock on which was built the army of to-day: imperturbable, unrattled by the surrounding chaotic conditions, utterly incapable of flight of imagination, conscious of nothing but his duty and its obligations. I was in luck to pick up such an ally in this hour of stress.

'It seems to me to come to this, Staff-Sergeant,' I said. 'You and I are the only sane people here. We've got to go down into that shemozzle and try to persuade men whom we don't know and who don't know us to leave their convivialities and fall in for a route march under you and me. It'll take a bit of doing, but it's

no use sending on messages to Headquarters: the Prussians will be in the town to-night or first thing in the morning.'

'That's right, sir,' replied the Sapper in his gruff voice. 'It's the only way. They'll come all right.' We walked down the steps, but half-way down we stopped.

'I'll speak to them from here,' I said, 'where they can all see me. Go down and get hold of a megaphone and something noisy to help us to attract their attention.'

But at that moment a sudden change came over the situation. A clatter in the street behind us could be heard round the corner of the building and drew the whole mob with the uncontrollable heave of an Atlantic roller to that end of the Square. Cavalry! Whose? That was the burning, distracting question.

'Les Prussiens!' screamed the panic-mongers with subdued groans and jeers of 'A bas les assassins!' from some of the more daring elements.

'Les Anglais!' roared the optimists. 'Vive l'Angleterre!' And l'Angleterre it was.

A squadron of Dragoon Guards at full war strength was riding in open files down both sides of the road. As they reached the corner of the Square they passed straight on down its left side towards the station, while the squadron leader pulled out by the side of the Town Hall and watched them filing by. Then at some signal unostentatiously given from the head of the column the whole halted, turned horses inwards, and quickly dismounted. It was admirably done, a sobering demonstration of calm efficiency; and the precision of the movement struck the fancy of the crowd which broke into subdued cheering. As the commanding officer rode to the foot of the steps with his squadron sergeant-major and handed over his horse to his trumpeter, I walked down to meet him.

The Major of Dragoon Guards was a man of marked personality, every feature alive with quiet purpose. A man of action had made his timely appearance at a crisis where a lesser light would probably have been of no avail. As he strode up the steps I blessed him in my heart for the archangel dropped from Heaven in this supreme moment of emergency. He took me kindly by the elbow as he reached the top. It was not the first occasion of our meeting.

'Well,' he was saying, 'what's the position? I've got no instructions from anywhere, but I mean to comb out the town

and get away every single man who has lost his battalion and drifted in here from the line of march after the battle. Not one is to be left behind alive.'

I breathed a sigh of relief. Ten minutes ago I had been committed to this herculean task with one warrant officer and no more to back me. Now a squadron of cavalry, a veritable host for the purpose, had appeared on the scene.

'Well,' I answered, pointing below, 'I've only been here long enough myself to take stock of that. They're mad or drunk or both down there, and when you arrived I was just going to make a desperate effort to extricate our people from their clutches. I was going to speak to them from here and tell them to fall in on the road at the foot of these steps and march off with me to recover their battalions. They'll come all right.'

The Dragoon took a long look at the confusion down below.

'Yes, I see,' he said. 'I'll make that speech now and I shall want you and my squadron officers to scour the town and turn all stragglers to me. There's no guile about these lost sheep. It's this everlasting retreating business that's done it, and when the word to advance is given they'll prick their ears like terriers for a fight. Just now they're like tired children who have lost themselves and are waiting for someone to take them home. Tell the trumpeter to sound the officers' call, Sergeant-Major!'

The brazen notes sounded and the buildings echoed the summons loudly. A sudden hush fell on the babbling below. The Dragoon saw his chance and stepped forward to the balcony.

'Listen to me, British soldiers!' he shouted in a clear, ringing voice. 'You've lost touch with your friends and your battalions during the night. Well, I'm going to take you back to them now. In two minutes my trumpeter is going to sound the "Fall in" and I shall expect you to form two ranks on the road at the foot of these steps. The Cavalry Brigade is in the town and will cover your march out.'

While he was still speaking khaki figures could be seen already pushing their way through the packed crowds and appearing out in front.

'I fear the Cavalry Brigade part was a slight stretch of the imagination,' he added in an undertone, 'but I thought it as well to give them a hint of expedition. These fellows are all right! Look at them shoving their way out. They don't mean to stay here if they can help it.'

His officers had now arrived and all received their instructions for searching the streets. I was assigned the area in the Southern Section which was to be thoroughly scoured. The Square and the streets would be cleared first, and after these the two parties awaiting transport at the station were to be addressed and subsequently evacuated. Lastly a certain vital British document was to be extracted from the hands of the exceedingly unwilling Mayor whose clear intention it was to hold it as a peace-offering to the German invaders in the hope of amelioration of conditions in their treatment of the town. As the document contained matter affecting the interests of British arms it was to be seized at all costs from the *mairie* where it had been deposited that day.

Scouring the streets was not a pleasant job. To begin with it was uncanny and consisted in a weird game of hide-and-seek with shadowy figures of civilian will o' the wisps dodging in and out all the time, seeking what and whom they could devour. Here and there a good, honest British soldier, or perhaps even two or three such, would be met walking the pavements for all the world as though the war was over and they were back again in the streets of Aldershot, stopping to look in at shop windows or comparing notes as they met on their rambles. Yet always the answer to the order to report at the Town Hall was the same in substance.

'Yes, sir! We're only waiting for someone to show us the way out.' Or again: 'It's this 'ere retreating, sir, that's bustin' us. We've won two bloody battles and we've been runnin' away ever since. Can't we go forward and make the 'Uns 'op it for 'ome?'

Only the Scotsmen were showing signs of truculence. National pride demanded assurance that they would be returned to Highland regiments and not to English or Irish units.

But there was one critical moment in my life that night which nearly proved to be my last. At the bottom of a street which I had thought successfully cleared stood a thick stocky Highlander of swarthy complexion with a saturnine expression of countenance and a pair of stout legs emerging from under his kilt that would have done credit to a bull elephant. He was standing under a street lamp with his rifle under his arm, deerstalker fashion, and the moment he saw me riding down towards him he slipped quickly out of sight up a back yard immediately to his left. When a minute later I turned my horse into the yard I found myself in darkness and stopped to listen. The nebulous surroundings

appeared to indicate a stable yard with its usual characteristics, but of the soldier who had taken refuge therein nothing was to be seen. It was not until I had ridden forward a few paces towards a water-butt standing at a corner in a shaft of light from the street lamp outside that I suddenly became aware of my position of extreme peril. The Highlander was kneeling in the shadow behind the butt with the rifle to his shoulder, drawing a bead on me.

It was one of those rare moments when the cold instinct of fear will immediately prompt the next step, for better or for worse.

'Come on, Jock,' I said, 'we're not back in the forest now—I wish we were! You want to keep that round for the first good stalk you get after a German.' I waited for the effect of my words and prayed that they might have been well chosen and that he might not be a townsman! But the grim expression grew no less grim and I found myself still staring down that hateful rifle barrel. So we remained for a full minute which seemed like an hour while I racked my brains for the next move. A further scrutiny of the man's face satisfied me that he was sober but insane, and my own position was now a mere toss-up. Then suddenly the rifle came down and the man walked quietly up to me.

'All recht,' he said threateningly. 'I'll gang wi' ye, but only to my ain folk, mind ye, and to none o' your low trousered regiments fra' over the border.'

And with that and a wild look in his eye he shouldered his rifle and walked off out of the yard, leaving me to wipe the cold sweat from my face as his heavy footfall went echoing up the street. This had indeed been the longest day of my life, so long in fact that I could not for the life of me remember how or where it had begun. Meanwhile it would be as well to warn people collecting the troops in the Square that a mad Highlander was on his way up who appeared more disposed to shoot an Englishman than not, and would want watching.

Arrived at the Town Hall I found the situation entirely changed. The master hand had been at work. The massed meeting in the Grande Place had melted away and at least half of the crowd had gone home. In a large basement gallery under the Town Hall a party of fifty ladies under the able guidance of the Mayoress was feverishly busy cutting up large sandwiches and these were being systematically distributed among the two hundred men who were formed up in two ranks at the foot of the steps waiting to be marched

out of the town. One party had already left: and with a view to achieving a martial atmosphere citizens had been commandeered to form a band, the Dragoon himself being armed with a big drum from Heaven knows where and his trumpeter lightly equipped for the fray with a penny whistle. To this stirring accompaniment four hundred lately lost souls with the inner man mightily refreshed had stepped out cheerfully and swung away down the road amid the cheers of orderly spectators on the pavement and the gay waving of handkerchiefs from upper windows. On the outskirts of the town the band had broken off and returned home: but the lusty voices of the men could still be heard in the distance taking up the refrains of the latest jingo war tunes from home as they climbed the moonlit slopes of the Epines de Dallon over the valley away out west.

“It’s a long way to Tipperary,
It’s a long way to go . . .”

Indeed it had been! And the voices died away as the column dropped over the crest.

But the Dragoon had not finished. The troops had barely left when the parties from the station appeared marching up to the rendezvous between two lines of cavalry men. The men had been stirringly addressed by him an hour before in similar terms to those delivered at the Town Hall. On this occasion a spade had been called a spade, however, and the futility of further waiting emphasised. In accordance with these instructions the two officerless units appeared at the foot of the steps where they formed two-deep, turned to the right, and stood smartly at ease.

He stepped out on to the balcony and looked down on the faces turned up to him. Visions of tired children after an over-long day at the seaside crossed his mind.

‘Now then, men!’ he cried, ‘you’re going out of the town to rejoin the rest of the army where your battalions will be refitted and re-formed. Transport is available and the ladies of the town have generously provided sandwiches which will be issued to you now. One word more. Make no mistake about it, this long retreat is all part of a plan. Before you know where you are you will find yourselves turned round and taking the offensive right into the enemy’s country.’

Up to that last sentence faces had been dull and unappreciative,

but at the mere mention of an advance and offensive everything was changed. A murmur of satisfaction rippled up and down the double line and gradually the sound swelled into a subdued and respectful cheer. It was all that was needed and the great soldier had had his finger on the soldier's pulse. While he had been speaking the rumbling of heavy wheels had been heard and in due course a most remarkable phenomenon hove into view. One behind another ten black furniture removal vans of prodigious dimensions, drawn by Percheron stallions to match, drew up behind the parade in column of route. Within five minutes every man had disappeared inside them and in ten the procession was solemnly rolling away out of the town.

The Dragoon watched them go until the last pantechicon had disappeared.

'Well, that's that!' he said. 'Now comes the most difficult part of the business and we've got to get this blessed document out of the quivering hands of Monsieur le Maire. I'm rather afraid from what I've seen of him that he's going to give trouble.'

Within a minute we were in the Mayor's parlour. He was sitting at his desk and the light fell on his face which was deadly pale, betraying the fear he was trying to conceal under an attitude of obstinacy while addressing his remarks to members of his Council. When we entered the room a silence fell upon the proceedings and we pulled up chairs to the great desk facing him. The Dragoon spoke first and in admirable French.

'Now then, Monsieur le Maire,' he said emphatically, 'we have no time to waste and I fear I must press you for the immediate delivery of the English document of which we have spoken and which has wrongly fallen into your hands. I am here now with the authority of the Commander-in-Chief to recover it.'

The Mayor raised his hands to heaven and looked round to his companions for moral support and justification.

'But we have discussed the matter in Council, mon Commandant, and we have decided that we are in no way entitled to part with papers which have been handed to us confidentially for safe keeping. We are agreed on that, are we not, Messieurs?' he added, turning to the others.

A murmur of assent followed, but the reply came with amazing alacrity and cut it short.

'I can't help that. There is no alternative. I fear your honour and my duty cannot be reconciled. If you do not agree you will

have to accompany my squadron bringing the paper with you and you will justify your action before your own Grand Quartier Général to-morrow. Come,' he continued, 'be honest with yourself. You are holding the thing as a peace-offering for the enemy in the hope of securing special terms in their treatment of the town for which you are responsible. Very reasonable, monsieur, but unpardonable when carried out at the expense of your allies. No ! That is a bit *trop fort*. You will hand it over to me without further delay or—you will be prepared to come with us forthwith as I have said.'

The sweat of capitulation shewed itself on the Mayor's face. He wrung his hands and turned deprecatingly to the members of his Council to signify that further argument under the circumstances appeared worse than useless. The safe was unlocked, the paper extracted and grudgingly handed over. As we left the room the thermometer of the Entente might almost have been heard dropping to freezing-point !

Outside, the officers of the squadron were waiting to report horses watered and fed with all men plentifully supplied in the matter of sandwiches. The Mayoress had done her duty by the soldier nobly and once again in the history of her country the lady in the case had worn the trousers.

It was two o'clock in the morning when the squadron rode quietly out of the town. Everything was peaceful and the Grande Place was empty. Only a dog was baying the moon. Order had emerged from panic, confidence from hysteria : the citizens slept in their beds resigned to whatever the morrow might bring.

Last of all, behind his command, rode the man who alone had brought it about.

And at that same moment the night watchmen in the city spied a forest of lances appearing against the moonlit skyline to the north and heard the advanced Uhlan patrols clattering over the cobbles into the town behind us.

[In December, writing of Col. Jelf's death, I said that 'at my request he was engaged on a ninth contribution so as to complete the series by an episode, contrasting the Old Army and the New, when Death stayed his hand.' Later, I learnt that he had been able to finish this : 'Eheu Fugaces' will therefore appear in May.—G.]

THE LADY OF THE BLUE ROOM.

BY D. McDOUGALL.

PROBABLY few frequenters of Paris, even those familiar with all kinds of out-of-the-way corners that speak of the past history of *la ville lumière*, are aware that at a certain spot in the vast ornamental gardens spreading westwards from the Louvre and enclosed by its two almost endless side wings, they are treading on ground once consecrated to the habitation of a latter-day Egeria whose fame was little less than that of the nymph of antiquity. But, as you make your way along the easterly border of the Place du Carrousel, near the statue of Gambetta, a stone thrown would be bound to land somewhere within the area in which the abode of this seventeenth-century 'oracle' stood—for which epithet we have Sainte-Beuve's authority. For in the *Causerie du Lundi* devoted to Vincent Voiture, the *protégé* of the Marquise de Rambouillet—and it is with that celebrated lady that we are concerned—Sainte-Beuve speaks of the first of the *Salonières* as '*l'oracle du mérite et de la politesse*'; but we are led to suspect a slightly ironical smile accompanying this tribute; for the critic could not have been ignorant of the prevailing fashion in the nineteenth century to replace the essentially human, brilliant hostess of the Blue Room (as her famous apartment came to be known) and the founder of the vogue of the *Salon*, by an unsubstantial being whose natural place would not seem to have been in that galaxy of fair and often frail ladies who graced the Paris of the opening decades of the seventeenth century. In reality there was nothing oracular about Catherine de Vivonne and she has deserved that her reputation should be rescued by modern research from the too rarified atmosphere into which some of her admirers had wafted it. And to quote a typical example of this fashion we may go to M. Livet's *Précieux et Précieuses*, which appeared in the eighteen-fifties, where enthusiasm led him to write of 'a noble and saintly woman whose glance like the burning coal of a prophetess purified hearts and lives around her.' But place beside this the opinion of one of her contemporaries:

'Chère beauté, que mon âme ravie
Comme son pôle va regarder'

and we realise that Malherbe here suggests the authentic woman he knew and loved, from whose name, at great pains (for Malherbe was never fluent, we are told), he coined the anagram '*Arthénice*' so that he could praise her in his verses. She was his lode-star; the exquisite and urbane hostess of the Blue Room whose name, in an age of unparalleled licence, no breath of scandal ever tarnished. She was neither saint nor sibyl and her laughter, always directed against the sham and pretentious, would have made short work, we feel certain, of those who ask us to see her in that guise. We may imagine her much more suitably occupied with the lighting of the ornate fifteen-branch candelabrum that from its place on an ebony table beside her illuminated the Parisian world of wit and fashion gathered in her *salon*, than with the altar-coal of a prophetess. Perhaps the fact of her social eminence has helped to burden her with this too-exalted reputation; for was not Pope right when he said that 'from high life high characters are drawn, a saint in crape is twice the saint in lawn'?

It is M. Émile Magne who, in our own day, and using the impartial and objective methods of modern criticism, has helped to dispel the mists of legend and to reconstruct an unbiassed but very alluring portrait of the Marquise. Such frankness may involve the risk of censure from those enthusiasts to whom it is not agreeable that the lichens and mosses adhering to a cherished image should be scraped away; a frame of mind that quite recently a learned Oxford professor illustrated when broadcasting a lecture on the Art and Ethics of Biography. He expressed the opinion that the modern school of it had occasioned deeper thinking and more wholesome anger than any other form of literature; and as the chief example of modern biographer, of those who have taken in hand the scalpel as well as the pen, he cites the author of that series of Mid-Victorian 'close-ups' that some years ago set the English reading public by the ears. For the deep thinking these portraits in 'Eminent Victorians' occasioned we have the professor's word; but for the general perturbation we can most of us testify from personal experience; for, by probing below the epidermis of his subjects, Mr. Lytton Strachey revealed qualities that conformed more closely to the normal standard than hitherto had been suspected. But ought it to be a cause of anger that the sum of his discoveries has revealed a few imperfections in otherwise admirable characters?

In the same way, in the French critic's volumes entitled *Voiture*

et les Origines de l'Hôtel de Rambouillet, we may discover in her true surroundings the authentic Lady of the Blue Room, whose achievement it was to lead Parisian society and to make her *salon* 'a centre of light and civility' in an age when manners were barbarous and morality was altogether at a discount. And it must be remembered that Catherine de Vivonne started with an initial advantage. Born in Rome, the centre of Renaissance culture and humanistic worship of the beautiful, she had escaped the unhappy experience of her French-born contemporaries—the horrors of the great Siege of Paris, one of the last of the episodes of the War of the League that had seen Catholics banded together against the Crown, first in the person of Henry III of Valois and then against his successor, the Huguenot Henry of Navarre. The capital was reduced to a state of destitution; but we realise that even in the direst straits, when church bells were taken for cannon and houses were demolished to supply stone to repair city walls and gateways, and vermin was devoured, the lighter element had not been lacking; as when pressure had to be brought to bear upon the protesting Duchesse de Montpensier to make her deliver up a favourite lap-dog reserved for her private consumption! It was a brutalised populace that in 1594 welcomed Henry of Navarre who, at the price of abjuring his Huguenot faith, entered Paris as Henri Quatre; but, by the time that Catherine came as the girl-bride of a young French nobleman to her adopted country, much had already been done by Henry, and his great Minister, Sully, to alleviate the lot of his subjects by wide-reaching measures of reform and reconstruction.

Her life in France falls into three periods: the first when as the wife of a high court functionary she frequented the Louvre and led the ordinary life of a lady of fashion; then in quasi-retirement in her own *hôtel* as the acknowledged leader of the more enlightened portion of society; and finally the time of the decay of her prestige and of her brilliant *salon* in the troublous days of the civil war of the Fronde; and through bereavement and ill-health. In her hey-day her leadership went unchallenged: for to have entertained the *beau monde* headed by the Princes of the Blood; to have known Malherbe on equal terms; and to have attracted to her circle practically every other *littérateur* of the day, including the group, headed by Chapelain and Conrat, whose private conversational club Cardinal Richelieu turned, willy-nilly, into the assembly that was given the august title, *Académie française*—these facts prove the Marquise to have been an exceptionally gifted woman.

Catherine de Vivonne Savella was born in Rome in 1588, the daughter of Jean de Vivonne, Marquis de Pisany and Julia Savella, a Roman princess. Of her lineage Catherine was justly proud. She was perhaps inclined to overrate it: at least, so thought Tallement des Réaux who remarks in his *Historiettes*: '*Je la trouve un peu trop persuadée . . . que la maison des Savelles est la meilleure maison du monde*'; but then Tallement is always a little malicious. In 1594 she became a French subject by letters-patent; and six years later, at the age of twelve, married Charles d'Angennes, Vidame du Mans, heir to the Marquisate of Rambouillet, a partnership lasting fifty-two years and reported to be without equal for felicity, in an age of proverbial infidelity. The Marquis was a spendthrift and given to dissipation, but she was 'all resignation simply through wifely affection and kindness without any parade of piety'; and the fortunate husband repaid her with a life-long devotion. An apparently unimportant event now foreshadowed the establishment of the famous *Salon*. The Marquise inherited at the death of her father an old dilapidated house known as the Hôtel du Halde not a stone's throw from the Louvre, in the rue Saint-Thomas; and this she proceeded to rebuild. At that time, in Paris, building, garden planning and general reconstruction were the occupation of the hour, and sounds long unfamiliar echoed in its streets. The cheerful blow of the hammer and the 'thin noise of trowels deftly fashioning' replaced the boom of cannon and the hubbub of the long siege; and as a reporter in the *Mercure Français*, heartily approving the change, had it: 'you saw nothing but masons at work on every hand.' The King himself, from the moment of his accession to his assassination in 1610, personally supervised this beating of swords into ploughshares, for Henri Quatre had the cause of the man in the street always at heart.

The energetic lady of seventeen showed determination of character when she decided to rebuild her newly acquired mansion and she was to a great extent her own architect. The originality of her plan lay in placing the entrance at one end of the main *corps de logis* instead of, as was usual, in the middle, thus ensuring a continuous series of apartments unbroken by passages. The perspective through a line of brilliantly lighted rooms would be delightful, but hardly compensated for the inconvenience of bedrooms and sitting-rooms leading one out of the other. The Marquise is sometimes mistakenly credited with having first introduced the fashion for red brick, white stone facings and pointed blue slate roofs that

struck a cheerful note of colour in the ancient rue Saint-Thomas. But for some years before she started on her enterprise houses had been springing up in the Place Royale built of those substitutes for the stone or the lath-and-plaster houses of medieval times; and also in the new Place Dauphine, that triangular block of houses filling the apex of the Ile de la Cité where the trace of red brick can still be seen.

Energy, in her youth at least, was a characteristic of the Marquise and the idea of a languorous lady receiving her guests from her *lit de repos* belongs to middle age when ill-health was increasingly her lot. By nature she was avid of life and gaiety and took a perennial delight in amusements both elaborate and simple: she revelled in practical jokes and played round games with all the pleasure of a girl. She advises, she comforts, she teases; she expresses the disapproval she inevitably feels at the conduct of members of her circle—but she is before everything else tactful. But at times she is cruel. Unfortunately, there is no painting of her extant and we have to fall back on word pictures. In the seventh volume of her long and tiresome novel, *Le Grand Cyrus*, Mademoiselle de Scudéry describes her under the name Cléomaire and we hear that she was tall and graceful; that her complexion was indescribably delicate; that her eyes would defy a painter to do them justice and that her sense of fitness always ruled her heart. This effusion, typical of its author, does not take us very far in our quest for the authentic Lady of the Blue Room. We may add that she knew Latin tolerably and spoke Spanish and Italian perfectly. Unlike some of the ladies of her circle—Mademoiselle de Montpensier of the *Mémoires* for instance, and the novelist Madeleine de Scudéry—the Marquise was literary only in her sympathies: a few verses, some letters and a prayer or two are all that can be attributed to her pen.

The Marquis and Marquise de Rambouillet took up their abode in their new *hôtel* about the year 1607 and the next ten years saw the Marquise occasionally at Court, but owing to a growing distaste for the proceedings there combined with delicate health and the cares of a family of seven sons and daughters, the eldest of whom was the lovely and haughty Julie d'Angennes, she at last ceased to frequent it. And her own social activities were becoming more and more engrossing, for to the duties of entertaining she added the organising of ballets and *fêtes* both in Paris and at the beautiful country property of Rambouillet. And she loved to contrive

'surprises' for her guests: a typical example being the building of the '*loge de Zirphée*,' the little inner sanctum leading out of the Blue Room, which came into existence so secretly that its presence was unguessed by them until one evening, a tapestry being withdrawn, this inner cabinet, exquisitely furnished and filled with priceless pictures and *objets d'art*, met their astonished gaze. Or at her country house there was the *divertissement* prepared for M. Cospeau, Bishop of Lisieux, who, conducted round the grounds by his apparently innocent hostess, and approaching a tree-shaded outcrop of rocks, became aware that they were peopled by nymphs classically reclining in airy garb; and Julie d'Angennes and her young friends shared her mother's delight in the good Bishop's amazement. Of quite another order was the surprise prepared for the Comte de Guiche whose dislike for certain dishes was well known and who, when pressed to stay to supper, found these dishes appearing in succession, and forced upon him by the Marquise's accomplice, Mademoiselle Paulet. When everyone had enjoyed his discomfiture a sudden order brought a magnificent repast to mollify the unhappy gourmet. It was the same young man who suffered from Chaudebonne's ingenuity in sewing up the seams of all his waistcoats after the Count's over-indulgence in mushrooms; who, thinking himself swollen to the point of an early demise, became horribly frightened until Chaudebonne offered to write an infallible prescription which ran 'try a pair of scissors.' Such were the typical jokes of these highly intelligent people; and with *fêtes* and ballets and games and the writing of verses and anagrams and the interchange of letters between the *habitués* and absent members of their circle the life of the *Salon* was passed.

The actual Blue Room and its decorations may be reconstructed, thanks to an inventory compiled by Sauzé of its furniture and treasures. As to the reason for its being called 'blue' Tallement says that it was painted that colour instead of the customary 'red or tan'; but M. Magne gives a more interesting explanation. The name originated, he has discovered, in a set of eight Brussels tapestries adorning the walls, given to the Marquis, his Master of the Wardrobe, by Louis XIII, and to which a still-extant receipt, signed December 10, 1617, attests.

Luxury reigned in the *Salon*: a vast Turkey carpet covered the floor and rich damask curtains masked the long windows. Round the walls were ranged cabinets filled with Chinese porcelains; and there were inlaid tables holding bronzes, girandoles and filigree

boxes and *étois* of beautiful workmanship. Shelves were filled with books in rich stamped leather bindings; and a massive gilt and bronze clock was a noticeable ornament, as was the fifteen-branch candlestick standing near the hostess's *lit de repos* which a canopy of light gauzy material covered and on which she reclined to receive the chosen guests ushered from the ante-room into 'the presence.' They took their place in the circle where wide-open chairs upholstered in damask and brocade were designed to accommodate the voluminous skirts of the ladies; while the more informal *tabouret*, without back, served for the men. Flowers were there in profusion; pedestals holding bowls and crystal vases filled with the choicest blooms stood everywhere. Through the long windows a view westward over the garden was obtained. And there a conveniently planted double row of sycamores hid the distressing proximity of the cemetery of the Quinz-vingts, the Hospital for the Blind; but beyond, and to the left, the tall roofs and spires of the Tuileries Palace rose above the trees. The guests who would assemble in the Blue Room were distinguished; but the taste of the Marquise was eclectic and birth was not the only passport: intelligence and the faculty not to be boring were qualifications that gained an entry as, for instance, Vincent Voiture, poet, wit and incomparable letter-writer, the son of the Amiens wine merchant, discovered to his delight. To the *Salon*, during the many years of its existence, came the first Prince of the Blood, Condé, and his lovely and frail wife: her relations with the soldier-Cardinal de Valette must have caused her close friend, the Marquise de Rambouillet, much heart-burning. There came, too, the Duc and Duchesse de Chevreuse from their mansion in the rue Saint-Thomas whose gardens marched with those of the Marquise, as contemporary plans of Paris show. The two sons of the Saint-Maur family, Hector and Charles, were there as intimates of the son of the house, the hunchbacked young Marquis de Pisany; Charles, after long wooing, marrying its eldest daughter, Julie d'Angennes. The young Duc d'Enghein, the future 'grand Condé,' came; and his sister the lovely Anne de Bourbon—the two acknowledged leaders of youthful Paris, the exploits of whose 'bands' of '*petits maîtres*' and '*petites maîtresses*' anticipated those of the Bright Young Things in the London of to-day. As the Duchesse de Longueville, Anne was to earn notoriety, like the Grande Mademoiselle, also a frequenter of the *Salon*, in the disturbances of the Fronde. How little did these brilliant members of this coterie guess that politics would one day range them in

opposite camps and even in open battle? There came, too, the 'pleasant' Abbé de Boisrobert, a satellite of Cardinal de Richelieu, who, like the latter's niece, Madame de Combalet, carried information to his Eminence as to the political opinions prevailing in the Blue Room, the latter's lofty position debarring him from visiting it himself. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon; the Marquise de Liancourt; the preposterously ugly Maréchal de Saint-Luc; the Duchesse de la Tremoille; the Marquise de Sablé; the gentle Madame Aubrey and Madame du Vigean, each accompanied by their daughters. And two well-known spinsters: Mademoiselle Paulet of the blonde hair and beautiful voice; and Madeleine de Scudéry, the latter always in awe of her fanfaronading brother, Georges, indifferent playwright and insufferable pedant. And as the right hand of the Marquise in entertainments and also of practical joking were Chapelain the poet, and Chaudelbonne with his particular friend Vincent Voiture; and in the same capacity there served 'Julie's dwarf'—that miniature person Antoine Godeau (later to become Bishop of Vence), the ardent admirer of the young girl.

The list of famous literary men is headed by François Malherbe; and the friendship of the Norman Calvinist with his hostess is an example of the attraction of opposites. But literary interests found them on common ground, for nothing could have been more to the taste of the great reformer of the French language than the fastidiousness of the Marquise. In the Blue Room, for instance, the battle over the conjunction '*car*' took place and elicited from Voiture one of his wittiest letters to Julie, who defended the use of the maligned word. But a more important discussion was that aroused by the '*Cid*'; and the Marquise never showed herself in more human guise than when she advised Chapelain to accede to Cardinal Richelieu's wishes and write a criticism condemning Corneille's play in spite of the high opinion in which she held it. But, nothing daunted, Corneille was later to demand and to receive permission to read aloud his tragedy *Polyeucte* to the audience of her *salon* where only a mediocre success was his; the dramatist's rough exterior and brusque manners appealing little to some of the frivolous exquisites present. The list is endless: but we must not forget Jean-Louis Balzac, the polisher of French prose and prince of letter-writers; and Racan, the writer of pastoral poetry; and Benserade and Menage and Vaugelas and Gombauld; and in later years of the *Salon's* fame there came Tallement des Réaux, collecting copy for his *Historiettes*; and Madame de Sévigné came; and

also a serious youth called Bossuet. The later years of the Marquise de Rambouillet are soon told : saddened by the loss of her husband in 1652, and the victim of increasingly poor health, much of her elasticity of spirit and, with that, much of her prestige departed. And for the *Salon*, with the growing influence of Julie and her pedantic husband, who had become Duc de Montausier (she had married Charles at last, at the ripe age of thirty-eight), it also lost its glamour. The Marquise was increasingly solitary ; death had robbed her of many friends and the quarrels of the Fronde of others. And Madeleine de Scudéry's 'Saturdays' were becoming increasingly popular and attracting to them many of the *habitués* of the Blue Room.

When death found her, two days after Christmas, 1665, we cannot think that she departed unwillingly to join her husband in the same grave. Chapelain, soon after, wrote some verses celebrating her, in which the following couplet appears :

*'Cet air, cette douceur, cette grace, ce port
Ce chef d'œuvre admiré du Midi jusqu'au Nord,'*

And we think she could not better be described than as a 'work of art.'

THE RUNNING BROOKS.

- I Commit to the Flames* : Ivor Brown (Hamilton, 6s. n.).
Winner Take Nothing : Ernest Hemingway (Cape, 7s. 6d. n.).
The Splendour of Torches : Cosmo Hamilton (Hutchinson, 7s. 6d. n.).
The Modern Muse : English Association (Oxford University Press, 5s. n.).
The Conquest of the Maya : J. Leslie Mitchell (Jarrolds, 18s. n.).
Science and the Police Officer : Henry T. F. Rhodes (Police Chronicle, 5s. n.).
France on Ten Pounds : } Sydney A. Clark (Nicholson & Watson, 5s.
Germany on Ten Pounds : } each n.).
Work of Art : Sinclair Lewis (Cape, 7s. 6d. n.).
I, the Tiger : Manuel Komroff (Heinemann, 7s. 6d. n.).
Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself : Radclyffe Hall (Heinemann, 7s. 6d. n.).

BRILLIANT critic, shrewd observer, master of fine English, Mr. Ivor Brown is also an expert in iconoclasm. He does not mutilate, he destroys completely, pitching the gaudy blossoms of highbrow sentimentality, the misshapen branches of modern poetry, the ugly roots of commercialism of sex in literature and entertainment with equal gusto and joy on to his mental bonfire whose roarings are 'reinforced,' as he himself puts it, 'by a little salutary rudeness and a spark or two of insolent contempt.' Nevertheless, for all its hygienic conflagration, *I Commit to the Flames* is not a book for the Puritan or the squeamish. Mr. Brown is no mincer of words, no glosser-over of the grossness that often masquerades as present-day intellectualism: he is indeed a little too prone to elaboration and emphasis of much that arouses his righteous wrath. Dispassionately and without rancour describing D. H. Lawrence as 'an impossible jackass'—a verdict most people would regard as conclusively damnatory—he yet devotes whole chapters to quotation and analysis of the Lawrentian 'philosophy'—an inconsistently generous bestowal of publicity. Yet even those who will certainly disapprove of this (and possibly other) sections of the book will find much to their entertainment in the rest of it. Truly humorous and humorously true, Mr. Brown is no pedant and he has the refreshing, because nowadays so rare, courage of intolerance. If he has not lighted a bonfire that will never be put out, his book is a cleverly built beacon amid a foggy welter of ideas and expression.

Mr. Ernest Hemingway also makes a brief appearance as potential fuel to Mr. Brown's pyre. Had his latest volume of

short stories, *Winner Take Nothing*, been published in this country a few months earlier it is possible that his appearance might have been more spectacular. 'For Mr. Hemingway's ability to describe episodes,' says Mr. Brown succinctly and kindly, 'I have profound admiration. But for his taste and judgment I have little'—a comment peculiarly apposite to at least one of the present stories, a study in sexual neurosis that should never have been allowed to escape from between the covers intended decently to conceal such clinical records. There are other instances too in this often repellent, sometimes strangely compelling, collection of things horrible and things of horror, though none leaves quite so distasteful an impression as of a violation of professional confidence. 'A Way You'll Never Be,' the chronicle of a few hours in the experience of a shell-shocked soldier on the Austro-Italian front, is a masterly example of the technique of suggestion; 'A Day's Wait' poignantly epitomises, in less than six pages, the inarticulate terror of a child who imagines himself under sentence of death; 'After the Storm' is a sea story whose power lies in its restraint and verbal austerity. This economy of words is one of Mr. Hemingway's most noteworthy characteristics—he instinctively uses one where (to quote Mr. Gilbert Frankau) twenty-five would do.

In contrast with so much of physiological and pathological crudity Mr. Cosmo Hamilton's *The Splendour of Torches* lifts us to realms aglow with virtue and fragrant with self-sacrifice. Were it not that he is too old a hand not to be aware of the value of flinging frequent sops of sophistication to the Cerberus of popular taste one would suspect him of having deliberately manufactured a novelette pure and simple. As it is, the book is too smart to fit altogether satisfactorily into that category and for the rest is so gallant and generally beatified in spirit as to disarm criticism.

The English Association has already earned the gratitude of lovers of poetry for their 'Poems of To-Day.' Their new companion anthology, *The Modern Muse*, is an amplification of the earlier volumes in that it includes the verses of American poets as well as those of the British Dominions. In a collection of which 'the main aim has been to make the selection fully representative of the various countries' differences in the standards of quality are inevitable. This is not, however, altogether a defect so much as a matter of adventurous interest, and much of beauty, lyrical and virile, is to be found, side by side with pages from familiar favourites, in the work of these younger representatives of Flecker's

'proud old lineage, Who sing to find your hearts,' they 'know not why.'

Books intended primarily for the specialist or technician often contain a great deal that is interesting to the general reader. Mr. J. Leslie Mitchell's *The Conquest of the Maya* is a case in point. Embodying many years of original research into the history of the Red Indian race, traces of whose ancient civilisation were found by the Spaniards at the discovery of Central America, this simply written, well-illustrated volume is a fascinating exposition and analysis of a problem that has become so significant as to involve 'anthropological theory for the world at large.'

Written from a much more definitely technical and specialised angle, Mr. Henry T. F. Rhodes's *Science and the Police Officer* should none the less make some appeal to the increasing number of readers whose interest in detective fiction includes the realisation of the important part played by the application of practical science in the detection of crime and should also prove a most informative stimulus to those wishing to try their hand at producing really up-to-date 'thrillers.'

The publishers of Mr. Sydney A. Clark's two enticing little hand-books, *France* and *Germany on Ten Pounds*, have issued these, the first of a series designed to cover many other countries, at an opportune moment. Even in these times of financial depression the word 'holidays' is already alluringly in the air. Those who would like, for the first or twentieth time, to venture abroad but are deterred by rates of exchange or disproportionate ideas as to cost will be astonished to learn what even a depreciated pound can be made to do in France or Germany when expended as Mr. Clark advises, for he writes with the verve of an enthusiast regarding thrift as an essentially entertaining part of holiday adventuring.

Mr. Sinclair Lewis's *Work of Art* is a less vigorous, and certainly less startling, piece of work than his last novel, 'Ann Vickers,' with its terrible pictures of prison life. It is almost as though, after the strenuous emotion, the passionate indictments of the earlier book, the author were resting on his mental oars, drifting easily on the stream of a perfectly credible story, but more concerned with the environment than with the inwardness of his characters. Yet, once begun, it is difficult not to go on reading this history of two brothers—the elder driven by the urge of the true craftsman to create a 'work of art' out of the business of hotel-keeping, the younger a waster, self-labelled as a literary

genius—because, as is the way with everything Mr. Lewis writes, his satire, his keen powers of observation, his immensely wide knowledge of life stimulate interest over and over again. It is only at the end one realises that, in comparison with what he has done and may easily do again, the book is cinematic rather than dramatic—a series of swift-moving, skilfully collated pictures that fade one into the other and leave no very deep impression as they pass.

One suspects that Mr. Manuel Komroff, author of *I, the Tiger*, wrote his book mainly as propaganda against the exploitation of wild animals in certain types of films. This is not the place to discuss the ethics of such entertainments; most people have their own opinions about them; many do not believe the carefully worded statements usually accompanying them that the pictures have been obtained without cruelty, 'faking,' or any human intervention beyond the making of the photographic records. Mr. Komroff tells a different tale, making his protagonist a tiger that, trapped as a cub, is sold to a circus and then carried back to its native jungle to 'star' in a 'super' film production. The book is written in the first person—always a rather disconcerting method as applied to an animal hero—and presupposes a great deal of knowledge and understanding of men and their affairs which it is difficult to see how a caged beast could have acquired. Those who like this type of story, however, will find in it much with which to sympathise and to appreciate. The concluding chapters are an indictment, not only of the film industry but of that public which ignores the means so long as the end of its own excitement is achieved.

In the eyes of the discerning reader Miss Radclyffe Hall's reputation rests not upon her banned book but upon 'Adam's Breed'—one of the finest novels of the last quarter of a century written by a woman—and her lovely, wise and tender 'The Master of the House.' It is, therefore, a pity that the title story of *Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself* is linked in the author's forenote with the forbidden book. Of the other tales, the longest concerns 'Henry Dobbs, born and reared in a poverty amounting to squalor; surrounded by ugliness all his days, yet worshipping beauty—an astonishing chap!' If the characterisation here seems a little overdrawn, the same must be said also of the study of two Italian brothers in 'Upon the Mountains,' though 'Fräulein Schwartz' and 'The Rest Cure—1932' are more convincing, the one in its pitifulness, the other in its quietly effective depicting of the onset of insanity.

THE 'CORNHILL' COMPETITIONS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 126.

THE Editor of the CORNHILL offers two prizes of books to the value of £1 from John Murray's catalogue, to the two solvers of the Literary Acrostic whose letters are opened first. Answers must be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, 50 Albemarle Street, W.I., and must contain the Coupon from page iii of the preliminary pages of this issue.

'Our —— is but a —— and a forgetting.'

1. 'The fulness of your ——, I feel.'
2. 'Our souls have sight of that —— sea.'
3. 'Another —— hath been, and other palms are won.'
4. 'Untouch'd, unbreathed upon. —— happy guest.'
5. 'O that some minstrel's —— were near.'

Answer to Acrostic 124: BishoP (*The Ingoldsby Legends*), AzaleA (*Treasure Island*), RasselaS (Bulwer Lytton: *The New Timon*, IV), DictyS (William Morris: *The Doom of King Acrisius*), StephanI (Boswell's *Life of Johnson*), OvergO (Wither: *Faire Virtue*), FalcoN (Browning: *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon'*). Proem from Keats's *The Mermaid Tavern*.

No correct answers were received.

Competition No. 6. The 'plebiscite' for the order of merit of the contents of the January issue resulted in the following order: 1st, R. H. Mottram's 'A Trip to the Seaside'; 2nd, Garnett Radcliffe's 'The Passport'; 3rd, L. E. Arthur's 'Casualty Dresser's Morning'; 4th, Colonel Jelf's 'Hark Back'; 5th, Alan Griff's 'House of Desolation'; 6th, Daly's 'The Tunnel.' The prizes are won by Miss Kemp, East Sefton, Bieldside, and Major J. H. Sexty, 156 Warwick Street, London, S.W.1, and they are entitled to choose books to the value of £1 from John Murray's catalogue.

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